

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITH COMPASSION AND ACTION



Oleg Turlac, from Turlac Mission, David and Judith Hayes, and Alexa Likis James, CEO and founder of Blanket Fort Hope, gather at the spring 2023 WMU Foundation board meeting. Turlac Mission and Blanket Fort Hope were the 2023 recipients of the Hayes Endowment to Combat Human Trafficking.

Every January, I look forward to the new year with a sense of excitement and hope for all it will provide. It is an opportunity to assess and set new goals—to make for a brighter, better future. One area that must be evaluated and prioritized is eliminating human trafficking.

Every January 11, National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is observed. Human trafficking is a global crisis that strips individuals of their dignity and freedom, and it demands urgent action. Established by the WMU Foundation in 2006, the Judith Slayden and David Warren Hayes Endowment to Combat Human Trafficking continues to be a beacon of hope in this fight, offering concrete solutions through grants that touch lives on both a local and an international scale.

The core of the Hayes Endowment’s strategy lies in distributing grants, with more than \$45,000 granted since its inception. These financial resources fuel critical initiatives aimed at countering the sinister effects of human trafficking.

This endowment provides funds for three specific areas anti-human trafficking organizations address in supporting those seeking to escape that world.

1. Education and Awareness: By heightening awareness through programs that educate communities about human trafficking, these grants empower individuals to recognize, report, and ultimately prevent trafficking

incidents. This vital step is pivotal in curbing the growth of this devastating trade.

2. Housing and Counseling: A fundamental element of rehabilitation involves providing survivors with secure housing and access to professional counseling. The Hayes Endowment grants enable survivors to heal emotionally and physically, offering a sanctuary where they can rebuild their lives under the guidance of skilled professionals.
3. Job Skills and Business Development: The path to empowerment for survivors of trafficking often involves gaining practical skills and entrepreneurship opportunities. When you donate to this endowment, you invest in programs that equip survivors with the tools needed to secure employment and even start their own businesses. This support is key to their journey toward self-sufficiency.

This endowment recognizes the worldwide impact of human trafficking and ensures its grants span across geographical boundaries. At least two grants are distributed annually—one within the United States and another internationally—helping fight this issue that transcends borders and demands a unified response.

Let the words of 2 Corinthians 5:17 inspire your commitment to this cause, driving you to make a lasting impact in the fight against human trafficking, one life at a time.

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PEGGY E. DARBY is a Certified Fund Raising Executive and is honored to be serving as the first female president of the WMU Foundation.