

Harvard's Dr. Hanni Stoklosa Delivers Keynote Address at Bloom Benefit Dinner "FREEDOM", Raising \$100,000 for Bloom for Women's Mission To Care for Women Survivors of Sex Trafficking

By Bloom For Women

LEHIGH VALLEY - Bloom for Women, a faith-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing sanctuary and care for women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, hosted a benefit dinner at the Saucon Valley Country Club on the evening of October 4, 2023. The keynote speaker was Hanni Stoklosa, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer and Co-Founder of HEAL Trafficking, an organization that works to end human trafficking and support survivors. The event raised \$100,000 for Bloom's mission to combat sex trafficking and exploitation.

More than 200 guests gathered to support Bloom for Women's mission to heal, empower, and employ women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. The focus of the evening was on the value of "freedom", especially as it relates to the population served by the organization's endeavors. The evening also included a report on current statistics illustrating the need for the programming provided by Bloom for Women.

The average age of entry into "prostitution" is 12-14 years young, and 90% of women who are labeled "prostitutes" are owned by someone else. Most are abused by their pimp, drugged and beaten into submission, and victims often experience violence at the hands of "johns". They average 20 men per day and give all their earnings to the pimp. The program also highlighted the fact that the internet has changed how prostitution is organized, and online pimping can include video, still photos, and social media accounts.

To continue healing the damage done by sex trafficking, Bloom for Women offers a continuum of care, including emergency response, a two-year residential program, pregnant survivor services, and an independent living program in the Lehigh Valley area of Pennsylvania. The organization also operates the Bloom Creative Studio, a social enterprise that leverages art as a healing tool and provides employment opportunities for survivors. In addition, Bloom for Women operates My Sister's Closet, a women's upscale resale boutique that provides employment for survivors, community volunteer opportunities, and financial support for the organization.

Keynote speaker Dr. Stoklosa's expertise and advocacy for the wellbeing of trafficking survivors in the U.S. and internationally through a public health lens grew the understanding of attendees of both the challenges to be addressed and solutions to guide impact into the future. Her knowledge and experience, grown over a career studying and reporting on sex trafficking and its impact was enlightening. Dr. Stoklosa is an emergency physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and has appointments at

Harvard Medical School and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. She has advised the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, the US Department of State, and the National Academy of Medicine. She has testified as an expert witness before the U.S. Congress. Her perspective and knowledge were invaluable as she spoke in support of Bloom for Women as it continues to achieve the mission of providing sanctuary and care for women survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The benefit dinner was a success, netting \$100,000 meeting their financial goal while building community awareness around the challenging problem of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. All proceeds of the benefit will go directly to the supporting the survivors participating in Bloom for Women's programs. Dinner was provided by the generous donation of event hosts, Olav and Gina Sandnes.

In addition, there were many organizations and individuals that supported the event, including Champion Sponsors: Air Products, In the Light Roofing, Oceana Health, J.B. & Kathleen Reilly, Bill & Denise Spence, and The Topper Foundation. Builder-level Sponsors included: Russell & Roberta Lay, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Stark Financial, Carol Gray and Sharon & Roland Yoshida.

To see more photos of the benefit dinner, please visit: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.721826456649231&type=3> or <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.721816203316923&type=3>

To Donate to Bloom for Women please visit: <https://bloomforwomen.kindful.com/>

For more information about Bloom for Women and the benefit dinner, visit www.bloomforwomen.org



Dr. Stoklosa, Event Host, Gina Sandnes and Bloom CEO, Carol Andersen



Reena Kirspeel, Carol Andersen, Becky Braisted, Janet Spencer, Kristina Barkey