

## **Lakeland, Florida Declared A TraffickingFree Zone**

*First Municipality in Central Florida to Commit to Fight the Demand For Human Trafficking*

*January 23, 2020*

Lakeland, Fla - Mayor Bill Mutz and the Lakeland City Commission today issued a proclamation declaring the City of Lakeland, Florida, as a Human TraffickingFree Zone to reduce demand for sex trafficking.

The Trafficking Free Zone (TFZ) Program is a community-wide strategy developed by the Tampa-based U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking to fight the demand for sex trafficking within a partner community based upon proven demand-reduction practices from around the United States.

"We are proud to partner with the U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking on the TraffickingFree Zone initiative to reduce the number of sex buyers in Lakeland and surrounding areas," said Mayor Mutz. "This designation will assist us in our efforts to fight the illicit market created by the continuous financial investments of sex buyers which allows human traffickers to exploit vulnerable young people."

Lakeland City Commissioner Stephanie Madden, Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd, The 10th Judicial Circuit, Hardee, Highlands & Polk Counties Human Trafficking Task Force, area church pastors, and other concerned citizens joined today's announcement during a Human Trafficking Symposium at Lakes Church in Lakeland. Commissioner Madden presented the signed declaration by Mayor Mutz.

The TFZ program in Lakeland will be implemented in collaboration with community members and leaders, law enforcement, businesses, schools, healthcare organizations, churches, and the media, all while using technology to reach buyers and victims on a massive scale.

"We look forward to the continued collaboration of our partner organizations and agencies from throughout Central Florida who through the TraffickingFree Zone program that human trafficking will not be tolerated in Lakeland and to let victims know that help is on the way," added Mayor Mutz.

The program helps communities come together to arrest and prosecute sex buyers instead of the victims who are being sold, educates people on sex trafficking, and uses technology and research to reduce demand.

Utilizing the principles of the TFZ program, Lakeland and surrounding communities can expect to see a significant decline in demand for trafficking in humans.