

So. Baptist ministry spotlighted for anti-human trafficking work

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP and local reports) – The Baptist Friendship House of New Orleans was recognized last year by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with the Director's Community Leadership Award for its work in fighting human trafficking.

Kay Bennett, a Send Relief missionary with Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board (NAMB), accepted the award on behalf of the Baptist Friendship House at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The Baptist Friendship House, supported in various ways by a number of Mississippi Baptist churches, is a ministry of NAMB and New Orleans Association.

"It's very humbling, to be honest," said Bennett, who has served as the ministry's director since 1997.

"I've done homeless ministry for almost 30 years in our city," Bennett said. "If you do homeless ministry, it's a natural fit. Homeless folks are very vulnerable to being trafficked. Once someone is rescued from a trafficking situation, they're often homeless.

"Also, in doing homeless ministry, down the road after people have been sold over and over again, sometimes induced with drugs and their bodies have worn out, they often get thrown away like a piece of trash on the street. They walk through our doors then for showers and clothing."

Today, Bennett and the Baptist Friendship House participate in a number of activities to bring awareness to the issue,

advocate for victims, and provide tangible assistance to those impacted.

The Baptist Friendship House can either provide housing for women and children impacted by trafficking or get them into safe houses. They also can help victims get into long-term treatment plans in New Orleans or provide them with transportation to other locations closer to where they are from.

“Human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world, and it is all around us here in the United States,” Bennett said. “I think it’s very important that we, as Southern Baptists, look around us, assess needs, see what’s going on and reach out to help people.”

Bennett and the Baptist Friendship House have also been active in training Southern Baptists nationwide to fight human trafficking in their community.

For more information, visit baptistfriendshiphouse.org.