



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 5/23 AT 10 AM**

## **Indiana Convenience Stores Wage War Against Human Trafficking**

Clerks at Indiana convenience stores will receive additional training to fight human trafficking under a new program announced today. The Indiana Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association will partner with the national advocacy group, In Our Backyard, to bring greater awareness to convenience store clerks and customers through their program, Convenience Stores Against Trafficking.

“Our stores are conveniently located to meet the needs of our friends, family, and neighbors, but unfortunately they are also convenient to criminals who seek to exploit other human beings,” said Scot Imus, Executive Director of the Indiana Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association. “From this day forward, additional resources will be deployed to help curtail the reprehensible practice of human trafficking.”

“We believe we can make a difference, particularly here in Indianapolis where major sporting events are regularly held, such as this week’s Indianapolis 500,” Imus continued. “Because we sell age-restricted products, our clerks already are regularly trained, and now, with the help of Convenience Stores Against Trafficking, we will add another component to that training.”

Joining Imus at a morning press conference in the Statehouse were Denise Robinson from the Indiana Attorney General’s office, Representative Sally Siegrist (R-Lafayette), Juliana Williams of the Oregon-based In Our Backyard and Heather Meckes of Herdrich Petroleum based in Rushville, IN.

“The commitment to train their employees to watch for the signs of human trafficking and posting Freedom Stickers in restrooms creates a pathway to freedom to those who are being horrifically exploited. This initiative will save lives,” said Juliana Williams, program director for In Our Backyard.

One Indiana c-store chain, operated by Herdrich Petroleum of Rushville, Indiana has already implemented the program at its locations.

Heather Meckes, Herdrich’s Human Resources and Risk Director, said, “The training has been enthusiastically welcomed by our associates. It is very important to our family to support our local communities. We care and if we can help, we will step forward.”

*The Indiana Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association is the statewide trade organization representing the vast majority of the 3,200 convenience stores in Indiana. In Our Backyard links arms across American in the fight against human trafficking through partnerships with top law enforcement, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies.*

**For More Information - Scot Imus (317) 313-0444**