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Central Virginia's First Dedicated Shelter for Human Trafficking Victims to Open Early 2017
Safe Harbor, Bon Secours partner to open shelter for human trafficking victims of Central Virginia

Richmond, Va. (Dec. 7, 2016) – Safe Harbor and Bon Secours Richmond Health System together announce the establishment of The Central Virginia Emergency Shelter for Human Trafficking Victims, the region's first dedicated shelter of its kind to provide shelter, counseling, safety planning and case management in a single location to adult female human trafficking victims.

The primary goal of the shelter is to provide victims fleeing their traffickers with immediate safe housing. Once safe, secure housing is established, staff will assist with addressing legal and emotional support needs, including learning life skills, gaining meaningful employments, completing education and securing safe, affordable housing.

Safe Harbor received a grant of \$500,000 to establish the shelter through the Department of Criminal Justice Services VOCA New Initiative Victim Assistance Grant Program. The grant will help hire staff, provide essential equipment and supplies to the operation of the shelter and define program development, among other items.

Many of the victims of human trafficking have not received basic medical care in years. Bon Secours Richmond, which helped open Safe Harbor in the late 1990s, will address medical needs of the victims, including emergency and primary medical care for shelter residents. Forensic nurses from Bon Secours Forensic Nursing Program will help them to get back onto their feet and on the road to recovery.

Bon Secours forensic nurses collect evidence from victims of physical abuse and sexual violence, including human trafficking, in the greater Richmond area and beyond. They are expertly trained leaders in their field, providing education to police, EMTs, teachers, physicians and other health care providers, emergency departments and many others, with the goal of identifying and assisting victims, preserving evidence and obtaining justice.

The confidential location, which plans to provide shelter 15 residents in Fiscal Year (FY) 17, will welcome residents upon its official opening in early January 2017. Currently, many human trafficking victims are sent to shelters in other areas of the state and out of state due to the lack of a dedicated shelter

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Central Virginia. As awareness continues about this societal issue continues to grow, the shelter plans to increase its capacity to 25 residents in FY18.

“The shelter’s ultimate goal is to help victim’s live independent and happy lives. Since our opening in 2000 as an emergency shelter for domestic violence victims, we have been growing increasingly concerned with the amount of human trafficking that goes on in Central Virginia. Through the shelter’s unique aspect of providing services in a single location, we will be able to reduce the impact of trauma on these victims,” said Cathy Easter, Executive Director, Safe Harbor. “We look forward to continued collaboration with the community to advocate for human trafficking victims and help them navigate systems that can be complex and re-traumatizing.

The Henrico County Commonwealth Attorney’s Office has prosecuted more cases involving human trafficking offenses than any other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Virginia. While Henrico County is the shelter’s primary service territory, victims of human trafficking who will reside in the shelter will be referred from localities throughout the Central Virginia region, including Albemarle, Chesterfield, and Hanover Counties, and the city of Richmond. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the shelter will also house federal crime victims including international victims of human trafficking.

“These women need a place to build a life again,” continued Easter. “This shelter provides the entire package of help, in one location.”

To learn more about the shelter and Safe Harbor’s work with victims of violence please visit www.safeharborshelter.com.

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About Bon Secours Richmond Health System

Bon Secours Richmond is part of Bon Secours Virginia, which provides good help to thousands of Virginians through a network of hospitals, primary and specialty care practices, ambulatory care sites and continuing care facilities across the Commonwealth. The not-for-profit health system employs more than 8,400 people, including nearly 420 providers as part of the Bon Secours Medical Group.

The fourth largest and only faith-based health system in Virginia, Bon Secours Virginia offers a full range of services including cardiac, women’s, children’s, orthopaedics, oncology, neurosciences and surgery at eight award-winning hospitals.

- Bon Secours Richmond is St. Mary’s Hospital, Memorial Regional Medical Center, Richmond Community Hospital, Rappahannock General Hospital and St. Francis Medical Center.
- Bon Secours Hampton Roads is Maryview Medical Center, DePaul Medical Center and Mary Immaculate Hospital.

About Bon Secours Virginia Health Care Foundation

The Bon Secours Virginia Health Care Foundation raises charitable funds to help Bon Secours Virginia Health System address the community’s growing health care needs with compassion and excellence. Through charitable support, we are dedicated to helping create healthy communities, advancing clinical innovation and providing an extraordinary experience of care. For more information on giving, visit www.bsvaf.org.

About Safe Harbor

Safe Harbor empowers survivors of sexual and domestic violence to transform their lives, and promotes healthy relationships for all. Since the agency opened in April 2000, it has grown from an emergency shelter to offering additional critical supportive services including community counseling programs for adults and children, community support groups in English and Spanish, court advocacy, hospital accompaniment and community education and outreach services. Visit our website (safeharborshelter.com) or facebook.com/SafeHarborRVA to learn how you can support our work. Safe Harbor is also an active

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partner in the Greater Richmond Regional Hotline, which consolidates five nonprofit agencies' call centers into one central 24-hour confidential helpline (804-612-6126) serving Richmond and the surrounding counties.