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Office of University
Communications

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“Release the Captives” Announces Schedule of Events for Anti-Human Trafficking Action Week Feb. 26-Mar. 2

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – An estimated 5.5 million children have been abducted, sold, or forced into slavery, and around 21 million people worldwide are considered victims of modern-day slavery. In an effort to bring awareness to the global tragedy of human trafficking and empower members of the community to stand against it, the Gardner-Webb University club “Release the Captives” will host its annual anti-Human Trafficking Action Week (aHTAW) from Feb. 26-March 2, featuring a range of events highlighting the issue.

Planned by students, several activities are scheduled to take place throughout the week. According to Release Club President Sarah Grace Moxley (Bluefield, Va.), the group’s intention is to offer tangible ways for advocates to get involved.

“I think it’s important to participate in anti-Human Trafficking Action Week because this week provides many different opportunities for people to learn about an injustice and take action in fighting against it,” Moxley, a senior education major, shared. “Most of the time, when you hear about a terrible injustice, there is not a clear opportunity given for a way to contribute to the solution. Our goal for this action-emphasis week is to provide ways for students to directly make a difference in the global issue of human trafficking.”

Release the Captives, which was launched in 2013 by former Gardner-Webb University students Julie Sliwinski (’13) and Caroline Nethery (’14), raises funds and awareness for local and international non-profits who are directly fighting human trafficking. The group educates the campus and local community on issues surrounding human trafficking, equipping and empowering people to live in intentional opposition to this international crisis.

Michaela Killon, a junior graphic design major from Mount Airy, N.C., was inspired to get involved in the club during her freshman year when she attended one of the events. “When I first came to Gardner-Webb, I was unaware of the severity and extensiveness of human

trafficking,” she offered. “Since joining Release, I have been able to educate myself, my friends, and my family about the issue, as well as take real action to prevent and end trafficking on a local and global level.”

Several events are planned for students throughout the week, including an open-mic night, a letter-writing session, a talent show fundraiser, and even a fair trade market, which will teach attendees about how their buying practices can support anti-human trafficking efforts. “A lot of companies that distribute products on a commercial level either use forced labor, or they compensate workers unfairly to keep their production costs low,” Killon explained. “Our Fair Trade Market will solely feature vendors who sell Fair Trade-certified products, so I’m super excited to not only raise awareness but also connect the community with some local vendors they can support in good conscience.”

Moxley and other club members hope to help students find a starting point to learn more about ways to create positive social change. “When you hear about the atrocities of modern-day slavery, don’t be afraid to take that first step to get involved and become part of the solution,” she encouraged. “It can be overwhelming to learn about and try to fight the vast injustice of modern-day slavery, but fighting for justice is always worth it.”

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.