

Bus route changes coming to Tempe



15 UPDATES TODAY 79° CLEAR



Advanced Search GO

Your Town | Voices | West Valley Preps | Get Out | Your Living | Marketplace | AZ Jobs | Obits | Public Notices



Paint the Desert Pink

Local News | 850-plus gather for presentation ripping EPCOR Water's proposal | RAT Race highlights sex trafficking issue | West Valley event touches truck lovers

Glendale

RAT Race highlights sex trafficking issue

Story | Comments

Share | Print | Font Size:

Tweet {0} Like {0}



Jarod Opperman/Today staff

RAT Race

Brenda Gifford passes out fliers in advance of Saturday's RAT Race at Mesa Community College Wednesday afternoon.

Buy this photo

Posted: Friday, October 24, 2014 7:00 pm

By Jeff Dempsey, TODAY STAFF

Hosting a Super Bowl is a proud achievement for any metropolitan area. It brings international attention, visitors from all over the globe, and millions in economic activity.

Unfortunately, big events are also big draws for sex traffickers, and there is no single event bigger than the Super Bowl. It is with this in mind that Phoenix resident Brenda Gifford started RAT Race Arizona, or Run Against Trafficking. RAT Race, which will be this Saturday at the Reach 11 Sports Complex in Phoenix, is an awareness and fundraising event Gifford said she hopes will get people thinking about what needs to be done to end sex trafficking.

Gifford said the idea for RAT Race originated last year during a five-month trip teaching English in Burma alongside her mother.

"The first week we were in Burma there was an article on the front page of a local paper about girls escaping from sex trafficking waiting three years before government had anything to offer them," she said. "Three years. We said to each other, there is an opportunity to do something meaningful here."

When they returned, Gifford said, the idea was to raise money to do something back overseas. A meeting with Gov. Jan Brewer's Task Force on Human Trafficking changed their minds.

"It was made clear to us that trafficking is a serious problem right here in Arizona," she said. "And so we decided we needed to change our focus."

HAPPENING NOW...

Firefighters raise thousands in fight against cancer

Donation to Phoenix's homeless pets takes bite out of flea season

Ruling: Right to refuse interview doesn't expire

Peoria police arrest suspect in woman's shooting death

Back to nature for Echo Mesa owls

Sun City West group makes petition push in EPCOR case

Sun Health lecture promotes women's health

The average age of trafficking victims is 13 years and nine months.

"Also, 10 percent of those trafficked in America are boys," she said. "And that number is growing."

One of the big hurdles when it comes to sex trafficking is awareness. Most people either do not know it is an issue or underestimate the scope of it.

"When I talk to people about this, often they are shocked," Gifford said. "They say, well, Arizona is a border state. But these aren't only foreign kids being trafficked here. Eighty-two percent of kids being trafficked in America are Americans."

Gifford said Saturday's race falls 100 days before the Super Bowl and while she knows it will not end trafficking, she hopes it will be another step in that direction.

"I've talked to thousands of people about this over the past year, all over the world," she said. "This is not a new problem in Arizona, and it won't go away after the Super Bowl. What this is, is a catalyst for conversation to raise awareness."

The RAT Race will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday at Reach 11 Sports Complex, 2425 E. Deer Valley Road in Phoenix. For information visit RATRACEAZ.org.

Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com.



EDITOR'S PICK

Tweet 0 Like 0

Discuss Share Print

Posted in Glendale, Topstory on Friday, October 24, 2014 7:00 pm.

More From This Site
Sun Cities Senior softball begins Tuesday
Super Bowl tops issue list at annual meeting in Glendale
Local Navy petty officers thrive working on aircrafts
Fill 'er up: Get free gas today in Sun City West
Skaters have say in potential park design

From Around The Web
11 People Who Are Quite Possibly The Dumbest People On The Planet (LolBoom)
This Is What Venus Williams' House Looked Like When She Sold It To Ellen Page (Lonny Magazine)
Jessa Duggar Should Think Twice About the Family She's Marrying Into (Stirring Daily)
When an Engineer Can't Figure Out His Son's Elementary School Math Homework, that's a problem. (Mamas Latinas)
Are These The Most Amazing, Hilarious, Perfectly Timed Pictures - or What? (Amazingly Timed Photos)

Recommended by

Comments Facebook

Grand opening
The new Verizon store at the corner of 99th Avenue and Bell Road had its grand opening Saturday.

CONNECT WITH US

Sign Up for Email Alerts

THINGS TO DO

Calendar table showing dates from Oct 27 to Nov 2.

Submit an Event

LATEST VIDEO

Welcome to the discussion.
Screen Name or Email
Password
Or, use your linked account: facebook google