

MAKE THE SHIFT

Maddy Stadler

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The sign above lists all the information needed to sign up.

Every day, students come to school and learn about a wide variety of subjects, but human trafficking is a topic that is rarely talked about among parents and children.

Human trafficking, however, does indeed affect teens. Often, a grown man or woman creates fake accounts and pretends to be some teenager to try and get minors to meet them. When they finally have someone in their grasp they take it, telling the teen they are pretty and making them feel more comfortable. One little mistake – talking to someone you think is a teen – can change your world, leading you to do things you never thought you would do.

Human trafficking is a big deal, it's everywhere. And that is why there are

many different organizations to help people who are affected by human trafficking, but one, known as SHIFT, recently held a conference in

the south Denver Metro Area. SHIFT is not an acronym, but the message stands for helping boys and girls "shift" over from awareness to action.

SHIFT was started in 2015 by a group of Valor High School students, and it has fought to help minors who are caught in the trafficking circle. The group later received aid from a man named John DeYoung.

"It's an interesting conversation to talk about, but we are getting a lot of awareness," explains DeYoung. "We have grown about 3,000 to 4,000 people in the last four years from people

wanting to help change this," DeYoung said.

The SHIFT Conference was held at City Point Church off of University Boulevard and Alameda Avenue, where many different speakers presented on the topic of human trafficking. Different detectives showed everyone a small skit of what it's like to be talking with a trafficker, and this got everyone's attention. After the sessions ended, there were vendors available.

"There could be a good chance that if teachers and students

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Red Rocks Worship Group sings *Come As You Are*, written by David Crowder Band.

TEENS COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Representatives of SHIFT sell merchandise to support their organization during a recent conference.

Contact SHIFT

- Subscribe to their newsletter
- Call: 1 (888) 373-7888
- Text: "help" to 233733
- email: info@Shiftfreedom.org

'I think that it would be a great thing to learn and talk about so kids and teens know how to know they are talking to someone real on social media and not someone random.'

– Former Arapahoe Rescue Patrol member David Pena

knew more about this, they would know how to prevent it," DeYoung said. "Teenagers in this generation are starting to do more adult things like drinking, smoking and having to take care of themselves most of the time."

When learning more about SHIFT and human trafficking, students should know about different signs that show someone could possibly be a target of human traf-

ficking.

Many have not heard of this program, which is making a difference in this community. "I've never heard of it, but I think that it would be great if teachers knew more about it. Education is key, so students should learn about it and know that it's serious," said security guard Greg Jordan.

ThunderRidge High School Resource Officer Josh Hays agreed.

"I've never heard of

the program, but it does seem like something teachers and students should watch out for," Hays said.

Former ThunderRidge student and Arapahoe Rescue Patrol David Pena added: "I think that it would be a great thing to learn and talk about so kids and teens know how to know they are talking to someone real on social media and not someone random."

Some good advice

to prevent trafficking includes having a good relationship with your family and knowing that they love you and want to protect you.

DeYoung and his team were also able to make a movie about SHIFT called *Perspectives*, about what girls and boys go through each day when being trafficked, including what their lives are like. The movie is available on the SHIFT Freedom website.