

**PRESS RELEASE**



## **Soroptimists work with local organisations to launch anti-trafficking ‘Gift Box’ exhibit**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**OCTOBER 2014**

Traffic in the area of College Green and Park Street will no doubt be stopping in order to see a huge gift box (the size of a small shed) placed in College Green by the Bristol Cathedral, between 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October.

**Opening ceremony on College Green  
Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October at 2pm.  
With Bishop Mike, local MPs and supporters  
Times: Thursday – Sunday 10am - 4pm.**

The gift box is big enough to step into and is wrapped in brightly enticing paper with cheerful bows and ribbons festooning the outside. Visitors to the box will also see that it is not just pretty but it is also offering a better life. The posters outside promise money, a job, and food - so why not step inside?

Soroptimist International Bristol, in association with the charity Stop the Traffik, Unseen and Bristol Cathedral are hosting the Gift Box exhibit on College Green. The project is funded by the Commissioner’s Community Action Fund from the Police Community Trust.

The Dean of Bristol said “We were pleased when Soroptimists asked us to host the Gift Box on College Green because it is vital that we continue to draw attention to modern slavery. It also helps us to highlight the work of Bristol City Council’s anti-slavery partnership, which helps front line staff identify and help people who have been trafficked.

SI Bristol is also working with Unseen, the Bristol-based anti-trafficking charity to offer this four-day exhibition to the general public.

Unseen continues to help survivors of human trafficking by providing a 24/7 safe-house where victims can rebuild their lives as well as a resettlement service so women can continue their recovery, stay free from exploitation and create a better future for themselves and their families. Unseen also trains frontline staff, such as police and health workers, to identify victims and works with government at a strategic level to shape policy and take effective action.

The Gift box mirrors the tactics that human traffickers use to lure their vulnerable victims into slavery. It looks pretty from the outside and the promises sound good, but the Gift Box gives the facts.

Most of us think slavery has been consigned to the history books but modern slavery is actually destroying far too many lives in the UK at the current time. In September this year, eight men were arrested in Bristol in connection with human trafficking resulting in two women taken into safe accommodation.

Victims of modern slavery are trafficked into the UK or moved around various cities for cheap labour – some working in illegal factories or food packing units, others on building sites, in fisheries or on farms. Many are forced into prostitution or pornography. Others find themselves trapped in domestic servitude and have to clean houses they are rarely allowed to leave, whilst some are forced to commit crimes and hand the proceeds to the criminals controlling them.

Soroptimist International Bristol feel, that by bringing modern slavery to the attention of many by way of the Gift Box, many more people will become aware of this horrific crime and help to stop it and to allow its victims to regain their lives, their self-respect and dignity

For all enquiries: please call Wendy Walden President S.I. Bristol on 07806 702225 or e-mail [wendy\\_walden@yahoo.com](mailto:wendy_walden@yahoo.com)

#### Editor's Notes:

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong and peaceful communities worldwide.

Unseen (charity No. 1127620) continues to help survivors of human trafficking by providing a 24/7 safe-house where victims can rebuild their lives as well as a resettlement service so women can continue their recovery, stay free from exploitation and create a better future for themselves and their families.

Stop the Traffik (charity no. 1127321) is a global coalition working together to help stop the sale of people; to see the traffickers prosecuted and to protect their victims.

**Bristol Cathedral** supports the work of the city's anti-slavery partnership. See [www.bristol-cathedral.co.uk](http://www.bristol-cathedral.co.uk) and <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/community-and-safety/human-trafficking>.

If you have concerns that someone has been trafficked, call the **Police** on **101**. You can also call **Crimestoppers** on **0800 555 111**.