

Dear Human Rights Supporter,

Welcome to the 2009 Human Rights Walkathon!

Human rights are the rights you have simply because you are human. The rights to an education, no racial or religious discrimination, the end to modern day slavery and 27 other rights outlined in the United Nations document on the subject, the Universal Declaration are your human rights.

How will the Human Rights Walkathon help improve the condition of human rights? It is important to note that people who know and understand their human rights will stand up not only for their own rights but also for the rights of others. The majority of human trafficking victims are originally located by private individuals.

People who understand the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights can easily recognize injustice. Why human rights? They are the foundation for building goodwill between people. In these dangerous times people of all faiths and races must come together to educate ourselves and our youth in human rights.

The Human Rights Walkathon will take place on March 7, 2009, in North Straub Park St Petersburg. It is a free event which aims to raise awareness about basic human rights including Human Trafficking (modern day slavery). This fun and free event is designed for the whole family, and is educational, too. The 2009 Human Rights Walkathon is being produced by the Human Rights Group, Inc., a private nonprofit corporation composed of volunteer staff.

This year we are very fortunate to be co-sponsored by the City of St. Petersburg Florida.

The Human Rights Group, Inc. has four major partners lending their support for this year's event – Youth for Human Rights, the Tampa Bay Academy of Hope, Community Tampa Bay and the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking (FCAHT).

Youth for Human Rights is a secular group with 90 chapters worldwide. The DVDs and printed materials produced by this group are sponsored in large part by the Church of Scientology. Youth for Human Rights teaches people of all races and faiths about the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was created by a United Nations Committee in 1948. This document is the international standard of human rights. Youth for Human Rights produced illustrated public service announcements on each of the 30 rights in the Declaration in order to do educational outreach in schools.

FCAHT is a nonprofit group working to eradicate human trafficking and provide services to identified victims. Human trafficking is modern day slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. This is why it is so important to have an office that will provide the service and assistance to serve as a liaison between law enforcement and victims.

FCAHT provides this office. The organization was created in 2004 by Anna Rodriguez, who has extensive experience in how to identify victims, provide advocacy, and understand how to pursue justice for victims based on her experience in law enforcement and assistance for prosecution, They are funded by local, state, and federal grant, as well as by individual contributions.

Community Tampa Bay promotes dialogue and respect among all cultures, religions and races through education, advocacy and conflict mediation. Community Tampa Bay promotes through Camp any town, Unity Days and other activities a community free from discrimination in which every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

TBAH serves disadvantaged and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 18 who live in socioeconomically depressed communities within Hillsborough County. These students receive coaching, mentoring, and leadership skills based on our Leadership Through Education model. The areas of concentration include: school attendance, school behavior, academic achievement, self-esteem, and leadership. Parental involvement is also a requirement for student success in the program. Services include: rap sessions, one-on-one coaching, school visits, home visits, health and wellness, college tours, and educational tours.

TBAH is dedicated to helping youth and parents take responsibility for their life, family, school and community. The TBAH programs are designed to teach and reinforce positive personal development and leadership skills. Youth will identify themselves as leaders by participating in a program that values them and appreciates their ideas and participation. Their personal growth is enhanced when they are cared for and mentored by adults and staff who are positive role models and by having their leadership capability frequently validated.

TBAH is also instrumental in the fight against illiteracy amongst our youth. According to a recent Release from the Hillsborough County Public Schools, the county's 2006-2007 graduation/ dropout rates are among the highest in the state. A major contributing factor to this crisis is illiteracy.

Registration for the Walkathon starts at 8:00AM. The walk starts at 10:00AM and ends at 11:00AM, with entertainment starting after the walk. The participants do 1/4 mile laps around the park. Walking is from 10:00AM to 11:00AM. You can do as many laps as you like and there will be a prize for the most laps done.

This year the entertainment will be fantastic and kid-friendly. We will also have children's activities, crafts and much more. There will be free snacks and water for participants. Walkathon tee shirts will be available for \$10.00. Many different schools, human rights groups and non-governmental organizations will be represented at booths in the park.

Please put your best foot forward and join us at North Straub Park on March 7, 2009 at 10:00A.M. to walk for freedom. To volunteer to help with this event call 727 657-7026.

Sincerely ours,
Linda Draskowski
Chairman Human Rights Walkathon
President - The Human Rights Group