



**February 17, 2022**

## **Minutes**

### **Introductions**

Rhonda Dawson, Pitt County DSS, [Rhonda.dawson@pittcountync.gov](mailto:Rhonda.dawson@pittcountync.gov)

Watsi Sutton, Koinonia Community Solutions, [wsutton@koinoniasolutions.org](mailto:wsutton@koinoniasolutions.org)

Michelle Johnston-Marston, Koinonia Community Solutions

Minerva Freeman, Pitt County Family Development Corporation

Melinda Sampson, NC Stop Human Trafficking

Kiera Claussen Womack, Pitt County NAMI

Liz Liles, Daughters of Worth

Dawn Robinson, Coastal Horizons, [drobinson@coastalhorizons.org](mailto:drobinson@coastalhorizons.org)

Bonnie Jean Kuras, TEDI BEAR Children's Advocacy Center

Katie Morgan, Pitt County NAMI

David Holler, Wellcare, [david.holler@wellcare.com](mailto:david.holler@wellcare.com)

Haley Lagunas, Brody School of Medicine

Leah Arnold, Legal Aid of North Carolina

Raj Jagad, Exchange Effect, [rjagad@gmail.com](mailto:rjagad@gmail.com)

Kory Williford, FBI

### **Good News**

Liz Liles: I want to thank this group for the opportunities you offer. We have been assisting a survivor for the last week and half. If we did not have this group, she would not be where she is now. It's changing lives for people.

Pam Strickland: On behalf of this group, I submitted an application for the Vidant Foundation. You submit a letter of intent first, they accepted the letter and invited me to submit a full application. I asked for funds for a facilitator for this group as well as the Pitt County MDT. Last year, they donated \$5,000 to us, which we have been able to use to provide resources to survivors.

Bonnie Jean Kuras: I want to say that it has been a treat to be able to collaborate with folks. Really getting outreach to the community through a variety of different avenues. The more they see us, the more they trust us, the more they will reach out to us, and I want to celebrate that.

Raj Jagad: We had an opportunity to participate in a CDC challenge. I looked at it and it was something we could have used, so I submitted a proposal. It didn't make it, but had we had someone from the university would have helped. Who did get chosen was a student at a university who submitted a proposal on ACEs. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in that.

### **Vidant Funds Report**

-We have \$3,905.87 available to assist with survivor needs.  
\$1,092.68 was spent to assist 2 local survivors with rent.

### **Pitt Co Human Trafficking MDT Report**

Pam Strickland: At the last meeting, the team did finalize the MOUs and now we are waiting on the signatures.

[Training Opportunities](#) (follow this link)

[Human Trafficking Cases in NC](#) (follow this link)

**Speaker:** Michele J. Marston-Stevens, Programs Administrator  
Koinonia Community Solutions

Michele Johnston-Marston: We are Koinonia Community Solutions. We are a 501(c)3 dedicated to building bridges to the underserved in northeastern North Carolina. We are building stronger families and better communities. What began as an outreach program in 2015 by Bishop O'Neal at Koinonia Christian Center became a separate nonprofit entity. At KCS we continue to partner with the church. Our three focus areas are youth education, economic empowerment and affordable housing.

Affordable housing has a longer strategic plan. We have programs to achieve home ownership, prevent evictions and provide credit counseling and coaching with more affordable housing opportunities to come.

Max Factor Leadership Institute is our youth education program that has been implemented in Pitt County Schools for seven years. It provides mentorship, after school programs and mentors have spent a lot of time getting to the heart of these young men (middle school years). We are working on summer school programs, the StrongHER program for females. You understand the

need. If you have a mentor and have your basic needs are met you are less likely to get trafficked.

Economic empowerment program offers job skills and work readiness training. We host job fairs, resume building workshops and work with employers.

We are doing a level up event over three days at the back of the church. Come as you are. It will be at the back of the church. All participants will get a voucher to pick up interview clothes. We will work on resume building, get connected to employers and we are wanting to help people level up.

Watsi Sutton: We are excited to continue networking with you all.

\*response to Raj's question about illegal activities prevention\* My background in the law as an assistant DA and manager of the New Bern Legal Aid office. I am familiar with the drug trafficking dynamic. There are lots of solutions to the problems that don't end and start in the courthouse. Some of the things I believe Koinonia Community Solutions have done are the Max Factor programs since 2013 and directly serves students from the West Greenville area. We are really excited about beginning to work with younger male students who are possibly being recruited by others for illegal activities. We are also excited to be looking at female students now too. I understand the dynamic when you have the absence of a male figure in your life. I want our impact to solve problems before it gets to court.

We want to give folks in our community options and we want to give folks in the community hope. We want to build bridges to opportunity, equity and hope.

### **Announcements:**

#### **Survivors Network Peer Support Group**

Wednesday February 23rd at 6pm (virtual)

A flyer and handout are in the folder. Please share with survivors and service providers you know.

**If anyone has suggestions for specific speakers, topics for speakers to discuss or news you want to share from your organization, please let us know!**

#### **Next Meeting**

March 17, 9:30 a.m.

#### **Adjourn**

**Next meetings- Mark Your Calendars**

**April 21**

**May 19**

**June 16**

[www.pccaht.com](http://www.pccaht.com)

Email [melinda@ncstophumantrafficking.org](mailto:melinda@ncstophumantrafficking.org) to add your organization