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Ending Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia is Topic of March 11 Event

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly student volunteers are hosting performances, presentations and an art show on campus March 11 to increase awareness about human trafficking in Southeast Asia, most notably Vietnam.

"A Light of Hope: Helping Vietnamese Women at Risk" is scheduled for Saturday, March 11, from noon to 8 p.m. in Room 220 of the Cal Poly University Union. The day will feature workshops, performances, and an art exhibit.

Performers include guitarist Tinh Mahoney, who appears on albums produced by George Winston; Lahn Tran, an award-winning monologist and writer who has been featured on NPR, off-Broadway theaters, and New York City Hall; slam poet Danny Le; and Trinh Do, author of "Saigon to San Diego: Memoir of a Boy Who Escaped from Communist Vietnam."

Vietnamese art by Jenny Do, Kiet Le, Tuan Phan, Hai-Ho Tran, and Trinh Mai will also be on exhibit.

Art will be on exhibit from noon-8 p.m. Performance times run from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m., with informational workshops during the two hours before each show.

The aim of the event is to inform people about the sex trade in women and children trafficked from Vietnam to brothels in Cambodia, explained political science student JR Webb, one of the organizers of the event.

Webb spent summer 2005 in Vietnam working for two San Jose area non-profit organizations working to help the victims of human trafficking and implement programs to help prevent women and children from becoming victims of the brothel traffic trade. He met children in the international rescue shelters, including a 5-year-old girl dying from AIDS. "Human trafficking in Vietnam is something we can make an impact on. We can't turn away from this problem," Webb said.

It's estimated as many as 30,000 children are trafficked between Vietnam and Cambodia to become sex slaves in brothels catering to tourists, many from Western countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe.

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