

Technology helping combat human trafficking

By Timothy Ballard

Nonprofit organizations, law enforcement agencies worldwide and even private industries are increasingly researching and funding technological innovations to disrupt and stem the global epidemic of human trafficking.

Worldwide, 2.4 million people are human trafficking victims at any given time, according to a 2012 United Nations report. Eighty percent of them are children and women sold into sexual slavery.

These technological innovations allow us to attack the problem from many angles, from raising awareness and decreasing tolerance to actually identifying and locating traffickers and their customers.

We have partnered with numerous companies so we have cutting-edge software tools, some of which we're providing free of charge to governments in developing countries, as well as domestic agencies.

O.U.R. was created Jan. 1 under the auspices of North American Child Rescue Association. As of early April, its volunteer Jump Team members had rescued 35 children in child trafficking stings in Nicaragua, Haiti and other locations not disclosed because of ongoing operations. O.U.R.'s efforts this year have already resulted in more than a dozen arrests.

Here are some of the tools currently used, or planned for use, by the O.U.R:

- Child Protection System software: Developed specifically to help locate and capture child predators, the software

pinpoints on a world map, in real time, whenever child rape videos are shared. Operators can monitor the frequency of sharing, identify certain types of files on the computers to identify those actually abusing the children, and zoom in to pinpoint the location. The software was developed by the late Hank Asher, a software entrepreneur and board member of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. O.U.R. is working to distribute it cost free to governments that do not have this or similar software. This is one of the most important products and services that our organization delivers.

- Google Glass: People wearing Google's new computer eyewear can, among many other things, shoot hands-free video and photos and share the recording. O.U.R. member Jesse Stay, founder of Commerce Futurists, is donating his Google Glass for O.U.R.'s next few missions so a team member can record the rescues as they occur. One of the important benefits of social media is to bring the news to the world in real time. Google Glass enables us to provide a first-person view of our missions and share that with the world. We hope to do Google+ Hangouts and YouTube videos, which we will share with our social media audiences, allowing those who support us to be as much a part of this effort as we all are. O.U.R. hopes to eventually have deeper support from Google for this use.

- Mobile Cause: This fundraising and mobile marketing platform allows nonprofits to raise money and receive recurring donations through Mobile Pledging, which enables donors to donate when the impulse strikes them. It expands on "Text to Give," the platform that was launched during the Haiti disaster and prompted mass donations in gifts of \$5 or \$10. Mobile Cause allows for donations of any size, and donors can share donations by posting to Facebook or Twitter from their phone. Nonprofits can also share their missions and effectiveness to prospective donors through messages and videos. Mobile Cause charges no transaction fees. Donors to

O.U.R. can text: save to 41444 to give any amount using a credit or debit card.

Timothy Ballard is the founder and CEO of Operation Underground Railroad, a coalition of former CIA, U.S. special agents, Navy SEALs, Green Berets and a number of celebrities who are on a mission to abolish slavery, domestically and abroad.