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**Safe Harbour Program Makes Strides in Identifying,
Assisting Youth Victims of Trafficking in Monroe County**

87 young people, identified as potential victims, referred to Safe Harbour Program in 2014

The Center launches support groups for victims, families of victims

Rochester, N.Y., Jan. 27, 2015 – The Center for Youth in conjunction with the Monroe County Safe Harbour program is identifying an increased number of youth victims of trafficking. As part of Human Trafficking Awareness Month, The Center released 2014 data that show both the extent of the local problem and the progress of Safe Harbour. The Center serves as the lead agency on a multidisciplinary Safe Harbour Task Force, which promotes awareness of youth trafficking and provides comprehensive services to victims.

“Sex trafficking of minors is not a new problem in our community, but we are becoming better at identifying young victims within our systems and the community,” said Elaine Spaul, Executive Director of The Center for Youth. “We are building strong partnerships at the local and state levels and removing barriers for youth victims to access services that address their complex needs.”

In 2014:

- 87 young people, the majority of whom were young women, were referred to The Center’s Safe Harbour program and identified as potential trafficking victims;
- of 87 referrals, 22 minors were identified as victims of sex trafficking;
- the number of community partners and referral sources increased;
- and The Center provided services such as shelter, clothing, case management and legal assistance and added a second part-time Safe Harbour Advocate position to work directly with young people impacted by trafficking and domestic violence.

As part of the county’s Safe Harbour program, The Center’s Safe Harbour team provides outreach and training to other agencies and schools to teach how to identify potential youth victims



through various warning signs. A youth victim of trafficking might have a history of running away; have unexplained injuries; appear to be physically exhausted; be accompanied by another person who seems controlling; or be unable or unwilling to give their local address, age, or information about parents.

Additionally, the Safe Harbour team helps victims access medical care, mental health counseling, financial assistance, emergency shelter and other basic living and safety needs. This month, The Center started a support group for youth victims and parents of victims of trafficking.

“We are making significant progress. This population is often distrusting of adults and systems, and our accessible emergency housing and counseling services allow them to voluntarily engage and build trusting relationships,” said Valerie Douglas, the Director of Counseling and Runaway and Homeless Youth Services.

Monroe County was among five counties to receive state funds in 2012 to support the Safe Harbour initiative. In addition to The Center for Youth, community partners on the task force include the Office of Children and Family Services, Monroe County Department of Human Services and Youth Bureau, County District Attorney and Sheriff’s offices, Rochester and other local police departments, school districts and youth services organizations.

About The Center for Youth

Started by youth for youth in 1971, The Center for Youth delivers a continuum of services to homeless and runaway youth and families in crisis, including emergency shelter, transitional housing programs and Crisis Nursery, which provides temporary childcare during emergencies. The Center’s school-based, counseling and community awareness programs aim to educate, engage and empower young people. All services are delivered with the knowledge that youth want to and can take responsibility for their life choices. For more information, visit www.centerforyouth.net or find us on social media: Facebook (Center for Youth) and Twitter (@center4youth).