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CONTACT: Peter Clerkin
202-945-4950
peter@aahoa.com

AAHOA and BEST Expand Partnership to Combat Human Trafficking

CAMAS, WA, Aug. 27 – AAHOA, the largest hotel owners association in the world, and Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) announced an expanded partnership in an effort to educate and enlist more hoteliers, state lodging associations, and hospitality industry partners in the fight against human trafficking. The expanded partnership includes a free co-branded anti-trafficking online training for AAHOA members and certification for those who complete the training. The trainings will be available in English and Spanish for group or individual training, and there is free training for managers. AAHOA’s and BEST’s partnership is also expanded to include promotion of the training through AAHOA’s vast network of state lodging associations and industry partners. AAHOA and BEST announced the expanded partnership at AAHOA’s annual Northwest Region Charity Golf Tournament.

AAHOA Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel said, “With over 18,000 members who own one out of every two hotels in the United States and employ over 600,000 people, AAHOA is proud to build on our partnership with BEST to train more of our industry in how to identify and combat human trafficking. It can be difficult to identify trafficking, whether it is commercial sex trafficking or labor trafficking, because each situation is different. With the proper training, hoteliers and their employees can save lives, protect their guests, their reputations, and their businesses.”

Human trafficking is a crime that impacts some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, including American children as well as documented and undocumented immigrants who are coerced into prostitution or forced into work situations that they cannot leave. Hotel staff are often the eyes and ears of the community. They are well-placed to recognize the crime and help vulnerable people to escape exploitation, keeping our communities safe from this type of crime.

“Hoteliers are one of the first lines of defense against human trafficking,” said AAHOA President and CEO Chip Rogers. “Employees who know how to identify the signs of trafficking and are trained to respond appropriately can help keep criminal enterprises out of their communities and, more importantly, help trafficking victims. That’s why AAHOA’s partnership with BEST is so important – together, we can empower hoteliers and their employees to be the difference in stopping trafficking situations.”

“This is a significant development for BEST and AAHOA,” said Mar Brettmann, PhD, Executive Director of BEST. “With an increased awareness of human trafficking and its effects on victims and communities, more businesses are stepping up to help combat this exploitation. Hoteliers are playing a vital role in preventing this crime. By promoting anti-trafficking training throughout the industry, we can ensure that traffickers and people who buy exploited people cannot use hotels to commit their heinous crimes.”

BEST is a Seattle-based nonprofit that helps employers understand how they can stop human trafficking by consulting on best practices, providing employee trainings, and developing model policies for businesses. AAHOA and BEST have partnered together to educate the hotel industry since 2014. In 2016,

AAHOA sponsored BEST to create industry-specific training that is available online at <http://training.bestalliance.org>.

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AAHOA is the largest hotel owners association in the world. The nearly 18,000 AAHOA members own almost one in every two hotels in the United States. With billions of dollars in property assets and hundreds of thousands of employees, AAHOA members are core economic contributors in virtually every community. AAHOA is a proud defender of free enterprise and the foremost current-day example of realizing the American dream.