

San Diego Area Middle School Integrates Virtual Reality Human Trafficking Awareness Education

Vista Innovation Design Academy (VIDA) Incorporates Radical Empathy Education Foundation's One Generation Program Into Their Middle School Curriculum

VISTA, Calif. - Jan. 27, 2019 - [PRLog](#) -- During a school day on a Friday, teachers and students took a break from their classes to walk in the shoes of a victim of minor sex trafficking, through the innovative human trafficking awareness education program called One Generation, from the non-profit Radical Empathy Education Foundation (REEF).

Vista Innovation Design Academy (VIDA), in Vista, California, is leading the way with this type of training in California, integrating it into their school curriculum.

Eric Chagala, VIDA's principal, brought the program to his school. "This is a real problem and we want to do our part through the unique approach of the One Generation program." He continues, "Students and faculty have been amazed by the way it makes people care about the educational materials they really must know to recognize a victim and what to do."

Through a Virtual Reality (VR) experience, learners learn how many victims are lured into this horrible epidemic. The interactive, narrative story tells the story of a young girl was tricked into leaving her troubled home by a "Romeo pimp" that meets and manipulates her online through social media.

"While there are many ways youth become victims, a Romeo pimp watches for weaknesses, like a lack of attention from friends or family, so they know that the youth are more susceptible to being pulled away through promises of love," says Billy Joe Cain, the designer of the VR application.

Learners use the VR experience, while others can view the experience from a traditional computer monitor. This allows them to see the choices made, hear the victim, and read along with the dialog to learn how this happened to the victim in the story. After learners have completed the VR experience, they move onto the blended curriculum phase, developed by experts across the world.

Human Trafficking is an epidemic in the San Diego area. Last Tuesday, the San Diego District Attorney, Summer Stephan, announced a new initiative for San Diego. During her announcement, Stephan explains "Combating human trafficking and protecting children from falling victim to this terrible form of modern-day slavery is one of my top public safety priorities," Stephan said. "Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the world in which traffickers profit by preying on unsuspecting children, luring them right out of their schools and homes with deception and lies."

A California law, adopted in 2017, requires California public schools to offer education and training on human trafficking identification and prevention is the Human Trafficking Prevention Education and Training Act (AB 1227).

"We want to reach more schools in California and across the United States soon," says Cain. "Other schools in the San Diego area have expressed interest in the One Generation program, and we hope the media we were blessed to receive on NBC San Diego helps spread the word about this very real problem and lets people know that teachers and schoolchildren need training to learn how to starve the supply of victims."

ABOUT RADICAL EMPATHY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Radical Empathy Education Foundation (REEF) is an Austin-based nonprofit dedicated to ending human trafficking in one generation. To capture the attention of young adults, they use virtual reality experiences that include fully interactive, computer generated environments married with narrative, user-directed stories. To support REEF's work, please visit <https://www.radicalempathyfoundation.org/donate/>

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