

# Fourth Annual Sergeant Noelle Holl Recognition Award

## *For Outstanding Efforts to End Human Trafficking in New Jersey*

In 2018, this award was named in recognition of Sgt. Noelle Holl (retired) for her tireless efforts and unwavering dedication in the fight against human trafficking. This award is given on an annual basis by the Attorney General's Taskforce on Human Trafficking to a law enforcement officer for going above and beyond in helping victims of human trafficking by aggressively pursuing traffickers through investigation and prosecution, and raising awareness in New Jersey communities. This year's recipient is HSI Special Agent Ronald Conyers.

**RONALD CONYERS:** Agent Conyers has been with HSI since 2003, and began working in the Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Group in 2007. In his time at HSI, he has been involved in countless investigations into dangerous traffickers, and in the rescue of numerous victims. Notably, Agent Conyers ran an investigation into human trafficking and alien harboring that resulted in not one but two trials with the U.S. Attorney's Office within a six-month time frame. These trials were the culmination of a six year long investigation into a brothel enterprise that operated in New Jersey and elsewhere, in which the leader of the enterprise, Juan Fredy Hernandez-Zozaya used violence and threats of violence to scare the competition. During the case, HSI conducted raids at several of the brothels operated by the enterprise. During one of the takedowns, HSI searched at least 6 brothel locations, encountered approximately 30 employees of the brothel enterprise, and located the evidence that would later be used to convict Hernandez-Zozaya, and dozens of his employees. However, during the investigation, law enforcement, specifically Agent Conyers and his partners at HSI, learned that Hernandez-Zozaya ordered robberies and murders in order to control his territory. Agent Conyers's persistence and diligence resulted in the confession and arrest of Wilmer Chavez-Romero, who admitted his role in at least two violent murders and several attempted robberies. Despite his recorded confession, Chavez-Romero went to trial, and was convicted on all counts after a three week trial. Just over six months later Hernandez-Zozaya went to trial on separate charges and was convicted. Agent Conyers was relentless in his quest to find victims, work with them, and help prepare for trial. Indeed, he was critical to working with survivors of human trafficking to enable them to tell their story and to help them stop the traffickers and other individuals who exploited them.

Recently, Agent Conyers received a tip about a victim of human trafficking kept as a domestic servant. He made contact with the victim, executed a search warrant at the premises, and extracted the victim from the situation. The victim was brought to the United States by her trafficker, and forced to work in the defendant's home without pay for nearly 10 years. The victim was coerced through threats, intimidation, and her lack of legal status in the United States. The defendant ultimately coerced the victim into a fake marriage in an attempt to cover up the crime. Defendant was convicted at trial and sentenced to 70 months imprisonment. Agent Conyers inspires law enforcement at all levels, and leads by example.