



NAME SARAH SYMONS
AGE 43
CAUSE EMANCIPATION NETWORK
HOMETOWN EAST SANDWICH, MA
FAMILY HUSBAND, JOHN BERGER;
 DAUGHTER, MAYA, 8; SON, LUKE, 7

“One person, one family, one community can help empower poor people to create better lives for themselves.”

Inspired by a film Five years ago Sarah saw *The Day My God Died*, a documentary about child sex trafficking between Nepal and India. She learned that nearly 27 million people worldwide are victims of slavery—and approximately half are under the age of 18. “The numbers were overwhelming,” she says. “I wanted to help, but I wasn’t sure how one New England mom could make a difference.”

Taking action Sarah contacted Maiti Nepal, a nonprofit group featured in the documentary, to learn about volunteer opportunities in nearby Boston. After a

year of fundraising and working on the organization’s brochure and website, she was invited to visit a human-trafficking shelter in Nepal.

An emotional journey Sarah’s first reaction was surprise, followed by fear. What would it be like to actually see the suffering she’d only heard about? “When I got there, I cried,” she says. “But the hope on the faces of survivors made it bearable.”

Hidden treasures One day Sarah stumbled upon a room full of handicrafts made of twinkling metals and glittery beads. She learned that the shelter residents use art as therapy. “The works were so intricate,” she recalls. “I wondered if they could earn money from their talents.”

The next step Back home

Sarah took an informal poll and learned that her girlfriends would be interested in buying crafts from at-risk women to help them establish financial freedom. She then contacted other groups and arranged for their art programs to become part of a nonprofit business.

Fair trade In 2005 The Emancipation Network (TEN) imported its first shipment of products—colorful hand-

appliquéd purses, satin jewelry pouches and assorted scrapbooks. The prices are determined by the women who make the products. Sarah buys them up front, pays for shipping and looks for markets.

Party for a cause One of the most successful ways TEN spreads its message is through home parties. “Before presenting the products we show a 15-minute video about human trafficking and what’s being done to fight it,” says



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Sarah. The latest trend is mother-daughter events, because many survivors are teens, and young people like to support their peers. “While the details can be disturbing, hearing them among friends can make it easier.”

Add it up With the help of TEN, more than 1,000 women have taken an important step toward independence. Many have been able to use their salaries to move out of shelters and into apartments. “The ultimate goal is self-sufficiency,” says Sarah. “We want them to establish financial freedom, rebuild their identities and, essentially, be slavery-proof.” ●



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