

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

January, 2021 is national slavery and human trafficking prevention month. It is also known as human trafficking awareness month. And it's an important time for us all to educate ourselves a little bit more about human trafficking and also how to spot the signs of trafficking human trafficking, which is also known as trafficking in persons or modern day. Slavery is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt. It can be physical or psychological. There is no single profile for a human trafficking. Victim victims of human trafficking can be anyone regardless of their race, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, or citizenship status on today's episode of good in practice. We are going to hear about an organization that addresses those who are victims of human trafficking.

Speaker 1 ([01:08](#)):

That organization is wellspring living founded in 2001. Wellspring living is a nonprofit organization based in Atlanta, Georgia that provides domestic sex trafficking victims, and those at risk with specialized recovery services through residential and community-based programs, the programs provide transformative care through therapeutic services, education, life skills, and personal and professional development. Our guests today on the podcast are Mary Frances Bowley, who is the founder and executive director of wellspring living. We also have August Trammell, who is the chair of the board of wellspring living, and she is also a senior practice development manager at Greenberg Traurig. We will also be joined by Christopher Walker and associate in Greenburg truck's Atlanta office. Our guests today are going to discuss the relationship between Greenberg Traurig and wellspring, and the great work that the two have done together before we start the interview. However, we're going to hear something from Ted bloom who serves as the managing shareholder of the Atlanta office and is the chair of the Atlanta corporate practice. And Ted wanted to share his thoughts about the relationship between Greenberg charg and wellspring.

Speaker 2 ([02:27](#)):

I know I speak for many when I say that it's been an amazing experience to get to work with wellspring. Living wellspring is a fantastic organization that has done so much good for the Atlanta community years ago. I got involved in the fight against human trafficking and help the rotary club of Atlanta for my task force to bring business leaders together, to talk about what we as the city and as businesses can do to fight human trafficking. When I was introduced to wellspring and the amazing work that they do, I recognized an opportunity for Greenberg Traurig to make an impact by focusing on individuals 2021, March the fourth year of our involvement. We've also taken on graduates of the program as apprentices and have even hired a few full time in doing so. We have found uniquely motivated and talented people who operate at the highest level of professionalism. Our experience with wellspring has brought our entire office together. We have the attorneys and business staff working side by side to create and host trainings on time management, active listening, and a number of other topics. We continue to have new volunteers, almost every session I am so encouraged and hopeful when I think about how many people have been directly or indirectly involved in the fight against human trafficking, thanks to impactful organizations like wellspring, Mary Francis.

Speaker 3 ([04:07](#)):

Thank you for being with us. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself as well as the organization wellspring?

Speaker 4 ([04:15](#)):

Well, I just look at myself as an ordinary person that found out about a terrible situation with women and a group of, uh, colleagues, uh, very, uh, people who cared, uh, really began to look at how can we intersect the lives of young women in very despairing situations. And that was over 20, almost 20 years ago. And, uh, wellspring will be celebrating their 20 year anniversary in, um, March, but it was a group of just passionate women who opened a residential home and not knowing that the very first girl that will walk through our doors was a trafficking survivor. And, um, because of our desire to just serve that person, that person actually taught us what she needed. And she really needed everything. When we talk about what do people who've experienced the victimization of trafficking, they need everything they need. They need that trauma-informed therapy.

Speaker 4 ([05:15](#)):

They need life skills, they need relationship building. They need to build trust. Again, many of them have all kinds of debilitating situations either at home or in the relationships of the past. Um, many of them came out of poverty. Um, and so there's just a married of needs that each one has. And so along the way, um, we have grown from just serving women to in 2007, mayor, Franklin asked us to be involved with girls. And so we opened a home for girls in 2008, and then we really got connected with GT law when we started our women's academy, which has started in 2014. And I think we fully got engaged with GT law in 2016. Um, from that point forward, we worked with, um, the Atlanta public school system and started a program for youth in an alternative school, serving both boys and girls. And last March, we opened a receiving center for youth who've been trafficked, which it would be an immediate place where they could get all of their needs met in one place, medical, forensic interviews, academic therapy, as well as residential, um, all those assessments and stabilization so that they could begin on a good footing and restarting the situations that they've been in. So it's been an incredible journey and could not have really seen the success that we are seeing with our survivors, with our participants without great partnerships like river trolley.

Speaker 3 ([06:48](#)):

What is the age? What are the age ranges of the women and men who wellspring serves?

Speaker 4 ([06:55](#)):

So the women that we serve are between the ages of 18 and 39. Generally, that's not an exclusionary, but that's where we see the greatest success with our youth programs. It's 12 to 17. And that, that is a pretty firm number because it's based on the criteria that our agencies, state agencies require.

Speaker 3 ([07:16](#)):

And can you tell me a little bit about the different programs that wellspring has for each of these age groups that do youth programs versus the programs for the young adults?

Speaker 4 ([07:26](#)):

Yeah. Our youth programs are, uh, two of them are residential. So we're providing assessment stabilization at the receiving center with both boys and girls working a lot with law enforcement. So if you remember back in August, when they had the operation not forgotten, once they recover a youth, many times, there's not a place for them. So we have become that place that works with all of our survivors, all the law enforcement and helping them to get them into a secure and safe environment and

get the assessments needed so that we can prosecute those who have been trafficking them. Our girls residential program is a little bit longer 12 months, and again, it's really giving them everything they need so that they can move forward in their lives. So therapy, life skills in a safe environment, along with their academic needs. We work with women, both in the community, through our women's academy and residentially.

Speaker 4 ([08:21](#)):

And again, comprehensive care is what we're looking at. So in all of our programs, we have the objective of trauma informed therapy and care. We have the objective, a comprehensive services in other words, wraparound. So we have food pantry in our community programs. We have a clothing boutique for our community programs. We take care of all the things that they would need, including childcare and transportation, if it's needed for our women coming into the community program. So it's really taking care of all the needs someone has so that they can really focus on the recovery that they're seeking. And

Speaker 3 ([09:00](#)):

Can you tell us a little bit about what the woman's academy does?

Speaker 4 ([09:03](#)):

Yes. Our women's Academy's objective is to move each woman toward living wage employment. So that involves a lot. It's when you're talking about someone who does not have work experience, and really, um, many times don't even have their high school diploma. So our women's academy, our first goal is to make sure that they have their GED or their high school diploma. And then from that point forward, we have a career track. Each session is 10 weeks in length, so it's not long, but it's long enough. And they are getting during that career track therapy, they're getting life skills, they're getting financial literacy classes, but also getting certified in Microsoft office. And one thing that we get to do at GT law is every Friday, your professionals are providing an extra layer of professional training for them, which has been a phenomenal gift as well as once they finished their career training, the career track, they move into the apprenticeship track. And of course, DT, law's been a great partner for that for, um, allowing them to practice what they've learned in the career track, as well, as later on many times they have been employed by GT law. So it's, um, it's been a great successful thing because most of our participants would not be able to find a living wage job. They might be able to find a job, but it would not be something that would lead to a career. And this is a huge step in the field of trafficking. How

Speaker 3 ([10:30](#)):

Does wellspring make a determination about whether someone's eligible for the program? And I guess this gets down to the nitty gritty of what is human trafficking. Can you tell us a little bit about

Speaker 4 ([10:39](#)):

That or so, um, we have a five point assessment that we use, and it is just asking questions that can help us determine, um, trafficking means that someone is giving you something about you to take advantage of you sexually. And so that's what sex trafficking is. And that's the group that we work with. There is labor trafficking. We are not, that is not our field. Um, but basically it is exchange of anything of value for the use of someone else's body. And, um, most always are, uh, women were trafficked as teenagers, just like our girls, but they didn't have an intervention. Um, so there is a trafficker involved. So that person is not really getting any money for the services she's providing, but many times, um, it starts as a teenager and then it continues until there's some way that they can get out.

Speaker 3 ([11:35](#)):

And I'd like to turn this over to, um, August or Chris can one of you tell me about how Greenburg char Atlanta office got involved with wellspring.

Speaker 5 ([11:45](#)):

I'm happy to take this one if that's okay with you, Chris. And a bit of a backstory actually, when I moved to Atlanta, um, I guess almost nine years ago now, and I was trying to learn more about the city and ways to get involved. I kept hearing sex trafficking over and over again. And then when I was asking about organizations that work, the sex trafficking victims and survivors, wellspring came up over and over. So I started off as a volunteer about eight or nine years ago now, and then recently rolled onto the board. And probably, I don't even know Mary Francis, if I was officially on the board or not yet. And Mary Francis called and said, can you meet me for coffee? I have a favor to ask. And she needed a place for the women's academy to do their Friday career readiness training. So we took the idea to Ted bloom who equally said, yes, the timing was actually very perfect because Ted is very involved with the rotary and anti-trafficking efforts throughout the city of Atlanta.

Speaker 5 ([12:45](#)):

And we had recently completed a series in the office about what is trafficking and what feeds the need for someone to purchase another individual for sex, and how do you then take those victims and help them transition to a survivor. And what's the law enforcement angle. So our office was very informed on the issue and very eager to get involved. So when Mary Francis came to me and said, is there an opportunity for us to partner with your firm and doing these Friday trainings? It was a very easy, yes. Um, for Ted bloom to agree to start hosting the program. And Tony hatchet says this a lot, who is our business director in Atlanta, and also very active with wellspring that we get more out of the women than the women get out of, of Greenberg Traurig. And I think everyone who has had the chance to interact or serve these women feels that way. And it's been an incredible almost four years now to be an official partner of the women's academy in the office. And

Speaker 3 ([13:42](#)):

Chris, maybe you can tell us a little bit about the type of pro bono work Greenberg Traurig does with wellspring and any, any of your personal involvement in cases you may have taken

Speaker 5 ([13:53](#)):

One of the things that, so I've, I've again been working with wellspring now for probably at least the last two years. So like maybe starting in 2018, um, August came to me and I think they had an issue around an employer, a former employee or staff member. And we were dealing with, um, a labor and employment issue and an EEOC claim. And I got to get familiar with the organization and the work that they were doing and sort of how this employee functions within that work, the issues around, um, the services being provided. And so it kinda gave me a front row seat to the, behind the scenes operations of the organization. And, um, we may get into this later, but long story short, we were able to successfully defend wellspring in is maintenance of an employment action against us employee. So I've, and from there, the work sort of spawned into reviewing, you know, policies around diversity and inclusion, like their equality policy, their referral intake policies and things of that nature. So, um, it's kind of run the gamut. I've done everything from, you know, again, representing them in employment hearings to representing the organization in, you know, reviewing his policies and taking a more proactive approach to some of the legal issues they face. So bring cool.

Speaker 3 ([15:13](#)):

That sounds like great work August. Can you tell us, in addition to being at the place where GT can help host the training portion of the academy, how else has GT been involved with wellspring and its work? So it's been

Speaker 5 ([15:27](#)):

Really amazing to watch people in our office outside of the Friday trainings take on their own individual personal mission with ball Springs. I will say the Friday though, that we do a variety of topics. We do, um, you know, top five strengths and we teach the women about how they can harness their strengths and utilize them in various areas of their lives. We do time management, active listening, all kinds of topics. And I think the most interesting part about that has been watching lawyers and staff across different disciplines, be so eager to be a part of the trainings and lead them on three hours out of their Friday morning and then have lunch with the women after. Um, we've also had folks from outside of the Atlanta office help with pro bono matters, specifically helping women and girls who were in the program. A big challenge that we see with, with wellspring is there are past issues on, um, records of participants that they need expunged or otherwise removed to move forward with very simple things like getting a driver's license.

Speaker 5 ([16:29](#)):

So a woman could go through the entire process of getting stable employment, going through therapy, getting her GED, getting Microsoft office certification, getting a job, but then can't get an apartment because they don't have a driver's license because of an outstanding warrant or other issue that happened when they were being trafficked. So that's another area that's been really amazing to see from pro bono all around the firm, because oftentimes these issues come up in states, outside of Georgia because women and girls are trafficked in other jurisdictions. And so the GT network has actually been really incredible to help in states like Arkansas, where we don't even have an office, but we have people who are admitted there and no others in, um, public defender and, um, other elected officials in the state who are able to help with it as an example of other pro bono matters that have come up.

Speaker 5 ([17:19](#)):

So I could go on and on Mary Francis about all the ways we've worked together over the years, but it's been really cool, I think, to just watch how, um, everyone has gotten so excited. I remember also early on a group of assistants from our corporate group put together a bunch of welcome baskets. So when girls come into the residential program at wellspring, they have nothing other, quite literally, they don't even have a toothbrush. They only have the clothes on their back. So the women and the, um, the assistance with, for women in the corporate group in Atlanta put together welcome baskets for all of the girls coming into wellsprings so that when they get there, they have things that are their own. That is sounds very simple to us, but it's really impactful and powerful that these young women who need to feel safe and taken care of and looked after, and they were a big part of that. Can you

Speaker 3 ([18:07](#)):

Tell us a little bit about, um, I think there's, there's another way that Greenberg charc has participated that we haven't spoken about, which is that my understanding is Greenberg charc has not only hosted some women for internships, but have also hired women, um, who have gone through the wellspring program. Yes

Speaker 5 ([18:25](#)):

We have. And I don't know why I didn't think about it earlier, but one of the neatest parts and most inspirational parts of our partnership with fall spring, because you see these women come in on day one and you take the test with them that talks about their top five strengths. And sometimes they don't even believe that they're a leader that they have empathy for that they're a teacher, all of these words that are so overwhelming for them to look at and say, wow, I can't believe those are words that describe me. I'm not a leader. I'm not these things then to see them as an employee at GT and participating in everything that we do around the Atlanta office. And as one of our members in HR in Atlanta said, run laps around other people in her department. So that's been awesome to watch that journey and still see every day

Speaker 4 ([19:12](#)):

It changes their identity, their identity of who they think they could be and their identity to the public. You know, it's one thing to have a story, but that doesn't need to be the rest of your life. And I think that, um, one of the best ways we can serve our participants is to give them the option to choose what they want to be known by for the rest of their life. And rebirth triarch has made that possible with so many of our, uh, participants and just will say, thank you for that. Uh,

Speaker 3 ([19:45](#)):

I think, you know, from what August said, it sounds like Greenberg Chara gets, gets a lot out of it too. Really sounds like the people in the office it's very meaningful to be able to help somebody else. Human trafficking

Speaker 1 ([19:59](#)):

Is not an issue that is in the news in many regions of the United States, all that often based upon your experience is human trafficking more prevalent in certain areas of the country or is in a nationwide problem?

Speaker 4 ([20:12](#)):

Well, I think that human trafficking is happening in every city, probably as prevalent as in Atlanta, but you don't have a mayor. That's just mayor Franklin and mayor bottoms, who have said that we are going to attack this. And the reason why it's so important that we look at trafficking as a real big thing, is because there are so many surrounding issues that go along with trafficking. So when you look at a person who's been trafficked and you look at the fact that they probably are coming from poverty, that's a big issue in the Metro Atlanta. The numbers of youth that are in poverty is incredible. You look at the, the youth that we're serving at the receiving center and our girls program about 90% of them are in foster care. That's a big problem everywhere. Um, and you look at food insecurity, you look at sexual abuse, that's everywhere.

Speaker 4 ([21:06](#)):

And so trafficking really embodies as long as, as well as drug abuse. It embodies so many of the social ills that, uh, all cities are facing. I think when you attack trafficking, you're moving the needle further in all of the areas when you attack the issue of trafficking. And I think that is why the mayor has seen this as a huge thing to really focus on. I think the other piece of that is that when we talk about building equity, we talk about human dignity. This is the opposite of that. And if we want to be a society that shows

dignity to people, um, we have to attack this issue, um, straight on. So I'm grateful that our city is not just looking at other things. They really put this in the forefront because I do think it's going to make us stronger as far as a, a city that really cares for their people. And I

Speaker 3 ([22:02](#)):

Really appreciate that observation because, you know, if it corrects, certainly my misapprehension and probably a lot of others that just because folks aren't working on an issue, it doesn't mean it's not there. And that it probably exists on a greater scale where most people are located, whether it's poverty, food insecurity, a whole host of other, all the issues you mentioned, and that may be it's something we should all be a little bit more aware of in our own communities and try to address it. And that actually leads me into the other question I was going to ask. What would you want someone to know if you just had one minute with them about the work that wellspring does,

Speaker 4 ([22:41](#)):

The girls and the boys, the women that we serve our people and, uh, they could be your daughter, your son, your niece. It's incredible how real that is. And beyond that, that you're so smart. They're so resilient. And if they just have access to care, if they have access to learn skills, if they have access to education and trauma informed care and therapy, they can do incredible things.

Speaker 3 ([23:14](#)):

And if you had just a little bit of time to tell someone something about either the work that you're doing or something that they should know about human trafficking, what would that be? Um,

Speaker 4 ([23:26](#)):

The work is hard, but it is very worthwhile. Those whom we serve have seen the worst of humanity, and I believe they deserve to see the best of humanity. And that's what we need to be bringing to them. If we, if you look at our staff, these are not just compassionate people. They are compassionate people, but they're professionals. Um, we just celebrated three staff members at our receiving centers who received their doctorate. This December, the best of the best are caring for our, our, our youth. And the best of the best are working hard every day with our women, um, to see their lives to be different. And so I think that it's important that we don't just give the crumbs off the table, that we give everybody the best and, and show that dignity in every way we can to those that have, like I said, seen the worst of humanity.

Speaker 3 ([24:21](#)):

That's for sure. I do know sometimes when I speak to attorneys about why they don't do pro bono work, this isn't often said, but sometimes it's implied. Sometimes attorneys have trouble thinking about experiencing what their clients have been through. Um, as you said, the work is hard because you're hearing stories that are extremely traumatizing to hear I'm sure. And you know, Chris, I want to turn this over to you because as an attorney, while you're, you're doing, you're doing different work to help the organization where maybe you're not hearing the stories, but you're finding different ways in which to support a nonprofit that affects the lives of lots of people. There is a misconception. I think that sometimes this work can be overwhelming and interferes with the billable work the firm expects us to do. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience in doing this work and how you've been able to balance it with the other work that you do for the firm?

Speaker 5 ([25:19](#)):

You know, I think you hit the question, sort of hits the nail right on the head about what we do and why we do it. Um, as attorneys, we working with nonprofit organizations like wellspring, what really appeals to me about our relationship with wellspring is that it sort of runs the gamut. We have an opportunity for attorney, then non-attorney the light to be able to work with the organization, but we also offer attorneys specifically like different opportunities. So if you're not necessarily representing one of the women or the youth in providing the legal service, you're still able to represent maybe something that's a little more, um, familiar if you will, to an attorney. So we're representing an organization you're helping at a high level, but in a deep way, the organization to develop best practices, to make sure that their policies are compliant with, you know, state local and federal regulations, you are helping to drive the business of the organization forward and able to support them by helping them to, you know, whether that's a cost savings in terms of, um, being able to hire and fire the right people and making sure that you have the right staff members on hand at any given time that are serving the women in the youth that are, um, staying or benefiting from the services being provided.

Speaker 5 ([26:42](#)):

So I think having the different options to be able to provide that service is, um, very important and unique to our relationship with wellspring. We don't give any less to our nonprofit or pro bono clients than we would any paying corporate clients. So they're getting 150% of our work, 150% of our time. I mean, we just need to be able to, you know, think about it and, and, and budget your time and your, and allocate the proper resources. So for me, what I do is I build it into my work schedule, like any, like any other client project of mine. Um, I make sure that, you know, we are setting expectations for the client that we're managing those expectations and then meeting those deadlines for me. Again, I think that one of the benefits that I see in terms of associates working with organizations like Springs is you are, is that the pro bono work provides excellent means to develop your craft as a lawyer, right?

Speaker 5 ([27:41](#)):

So it's a chance to interact with your clients directly in a really meaningful way. Um, I think it allows you to develop skills that are sort of critical, that I think of is critical to being an attorney, which is, you know, things like active listening and effective face-to-face interpersonal communication. And again, like I said, managing expectations. So when I think about how I placed the importance of that work in the grand scheme of my other billable work, I consider it to be almost more important because I'm learning both legal skills and my professional development, and I'm really giving back in a meaningful way. Um, and so that kind of drives and gives me at least be the outlet for some of the maybe more mundane, corporate work that I'm doing day to day. And so it helps me to sort of, it helps push, push me.

Speaker 3 ([28:34](#)):

Thank you for all of the amazing work that you do. Um, just incredible.

Speaker 1 ([28:40](#)):

Before we end this episode, I wanted to share a little bit about what you can do to help stop human trafficking. One of the first things anyone can do are learn the indicators of human trafficking, the us department of state, as well as many other websites have the top indicators. And some of those are a person living with their employer, poor living conditions, multiple people in cramped space, the inability of the individual to speak without the employer present. When the person's answers appear to be scripted and rehearsed where the employer is holding identity documents and where there are signs of



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physical or psychological abuse. If you are in the United States and you believe someone may be a victim of human trafficking, you can call the 24 hour national human trafficking hotline at 1 8 8 8 3 7 3 7 8 8 8, or report an emergency to law enforcement by calling 9 1 1. In addition, it's important to remember that trafficking victims, whether or not they are United States, citizens are eligible for services and immigration assistance. You've been listening to another episode of Greenberg Traurig, pro bono podcast. Good in practice. I'm your host, Caroline Heller, chair of Greenberg Charisse global pro bono program and litigation shareholder in the New York office. Our guests today have been Ted bloom, Aug Trammel, and Christopher Walker from Greenburg Charles Atlanta office and Mary Frances. Bowley the founder and executive director of wellspring living. Thanks for joining us. And I hope you listen in, in two weeks for another episode of good in practice.