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World Concern's Annual 5k to Stop Child Trafficking Goes Virtual

What: World Concern's 12th annual "Free Them" 5k

Where: Virtual – Anywhere

When: Saturday, May 9, 9am (PDT)

Register: www.freethem5k.org

April 14, 2020 (SEATTLE) – World Concern, a Seattle-based humanitarian organization, has changed its 12th annual [Free Them 5k](http://www.freethem5k.org) to a virtual event that participants around the U.S. or the world can join. The event raises funds and awareness to protect children in the world's poorest places from human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse.

Extreme poverty makes many children in Southeast Asia prime targets for human traffickers. And now, the COVID-19 crisis makes them even more vulnerable.

A crisis like COVID-19 that destroys already fragile economies and infrastructures puts those who are vulnerable to crimes like human trafficking, child marriage, abuse and exploitation, at even greater risk.

Here in the U.S., grocery stores remain open and the supply chain is functioning. Not so in the developing world. Imagine if your only source of income and food was a market where you could sell a goat or other livestock to pay for necessities like food, water, and medicine. Now the government has closed that market in an effort to stop the spread of the deadly Coronavirus.

"People are not scared of the virus, they're scared of not having food," explained one World Concern program manager.

Families who live in countries like Laos that are on lockdown can't leave their home to work or sell goods for income.

People who are hungry will do desperate things...

Now, imagine you're in this situation and you hear of a way to earn money in a city across the border. Someone told you there are jobs there. Your teenage daughter is healthy and strong and can make the journey. So you let her go... not knowing she'll be sold as a slave into the sex industry.

World Concern works to prevent the trafficking, exploitation, and abuse of children through effective child protection programs, educating children and parents about the dangers of trafficking, and equipping them with job skills to earn income safely.

For the past 11 years, World Concern has hosted the Free Them 5k in Seattle. This year, because of stay-at-home orders and restrictions on events, the event is "virtual" so concerned parents, families, and individuals can join the fight to stop child trafficking from anywhere.

On Saturday, May 9, runners, joggers, walkers, hikers and cyclers can take to their neighborhood streets—with plenty of social distancing—and make a difference in the lives of children who are at great risk of trafficking.

"World Concern's work with children is driven by the fact that the most vulnerable in our world need our protection, particularly our children," explained World Concern Vice President Nick Archer. "Millions of children remain vulnerable to trafficking due to circumstances beyond their, or even their family's, control."

Join World Concern's Virtual Free Them 5k on May 9 ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) Live video stream begins at 9:00 a.m. PDT) and help put an end to this horrific crime against the world's most vulnerable children.

For more information or to register, visit www.freethem5k.org.

For interviews or more information, please contact Cathy Herholdt, Senior Communications Director, at (206) 794-9775 or cathyh@worldconcern.org.

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