

Jammin' in the name of awareness

Get ready for live music and entertainment this weekend as the University of Toledo's International Justice Mission chapter hosts its first-ever Traffic Jam UT to raise awareness for human trafficking.

IJM is a global organization that seeks to protect human rights and fight violence around the world.

Demma Strausbaugh, a third-year biology major and president of IJM, founded the UT chapter almost two years ago and is also responsible for organizing Traffic Jam.

"Traffic Jam UT is a large collaborative effort with the university and the community to work toward a human trafficking-free Toledo," Strausbaugh said.

Traffic Jam will be held Friday, April 21 from 3 – 8 p.m. at Carter Field on UT's campus.

More than 500 people are expected to attend, and Strausbaugh said she is anxious to see how it goes.

The event will include food trucks from Rosie's and Deets BBQ, carnival games, raffles, live music and guest speakers.

One of the speakers to be featured at the event is Celia Williamson, who founded both the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition and the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute at UT.

Bands from the Toledo area, such as Little Pink, The Ice Cream Militia, Cryface and Shell, will be performing at the event.

Tanner Wertz, a member of The Ice Cream Militia, will be playing at the event. The band has been performing since 2015

and is completely made up of UT students. Wertz says he hopes that the event is successful in raising awareness for human trafficking in Toledo.

“It occurs so much in this area whether people know it or not,” Wertz said.

In 2016, the Ohio Department of Health named Toledo as the fourth-highest city in the country for rates of human trafficking, and according to the Polaris project, a non-profit organization working to fight against trafficking and slavery, overall trafficking rates in Ohio are on the rise.

“Human trafficking is very high in this region, and we need to do what we can to help those who have been victimized and prevent others from becoming victims,” Wertz said.

Strausbaugh expressed how putting together the event has been a lot of work for herself and the IJM executive board, but it has been worth the effort.

“I hope people will learn about the realities of human trafficking and start advocating for our mission and victims,” Strausbaugh said.

Admission wristbands for the event can be purchased at Ask Rocky’s prior to the day of the event. The cost is \$6 for students and \$10 for non-students. Admission comes with 5 tickets that can be used for food or games, and extra tickets can be purchased at additional cost.

There is also a VIP admission wristband available for \$25, which allows unlimited access to games and activities.

All proceeds from the event go to support IJM at UT and the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition.

“Awareness is the strongest defense against trafficking,” Strausbaugh said. “We want parents, students, and kids to know what the signs are and what they should do if they suspect

trafficking is going on around them.”