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"BROTHEL NEXT DOOR" PROJECT BEST IN NATION

NEW
ORLEANS,
La. (Sept.
29) – The
second
annual
Society of



Photo by Jessica Evans.

Professional Journalists' MOEY award, "The best of the best in collegiate journalism," goes to the Philip Merrill College of Journalism's Capital News Service and its in-depth "[The Brothel Next Door](#)" project about human sex trafficking in Maryland.

The award was announced Monday night during the SPJ annual "Mark of Excellence" awards ceremony.

Dean Lucy Dalglisch said, "The project by our incredible students would not have been possible without the guidance of our faculty members Deb Nelson, Sandra Banisky and Sean Mussenden. We are so proud of the powerful reporting our students did on a difficult, ugly topic."

The Mark of Excellence contest is the biggest student journalism contest in the country and includes both multi-platform and broadcast categories.

[SPJ Release About The Award](#)

Sex Trafficking in Maryland Report a First

The Brothel Next Door," was the first in-depth, data-based analysis of human trafficking in Maryland. The report was published online by [Capital News Service](#) and by local news outlets, including in Spanish by The Washington Post's El Tiempo Latino.

Five classes collaborated on the project: Media law classes submitted public records requests to every county. Capstone classes searched court files for details about how victims become trapped, traffickers operate and authorities respond. They obtained chilling audio of victims' testimony and a state database never before released. Their analysis found authorities had uncovered extensive evidence of trafficking but struggled to win convictions. They conducted scores of interviews to understand why.

THE BROTHEL NEXT DOOR

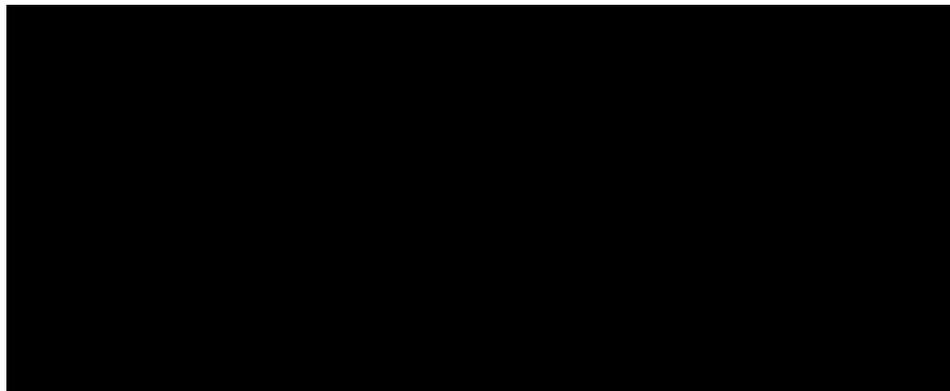
Human trafficking abounds in Maryland, yet few are convicted

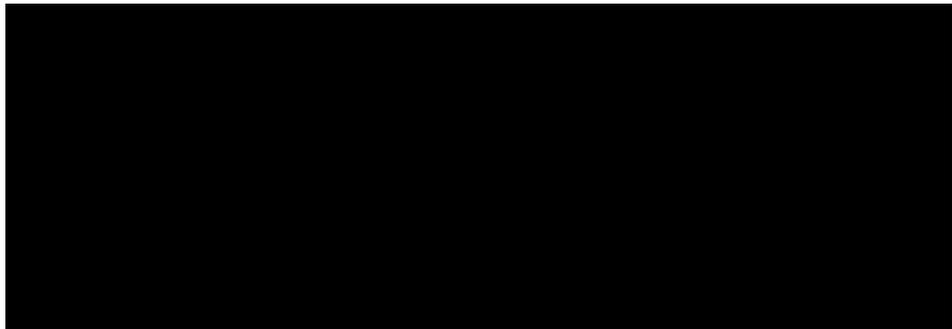
Associate Professor of Investigative Journalism Deborah Nelson said, "This is great recognition for what was truly fearless journalism by Merrill students. The project involved an extraordinary collaboration by nearly 100 students from five classes at Merrill — and the support of the university through a grant from the [Mpowering the State initiative](#), a research partnership between the University of Maryland, College Park, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore."

"Of all the investigative reporting projects I've had the honor of working on with students and two amazing colleagues — Deborah Nelson and Sandy Banisky — at the Merrill College, this one affected me the most," said CNS Digital Bureau Director Sean Mussenden. "It's tragic that thousands of women and girls (and a smaller number of men and boys) are victims of sex and labor trafficking every year. It's shameful that it's happening in our own backyard, and we — you, me, our elected leaders — aren't doing more to stop it. In marshaling dozens of young journalists to shed light on a local, national and international problem in desperate need of attention, this deeply meaningful project was a success."

Merrill Placed Two Productions in Top Five Finalists

Along with the CNS in-depth report, an award-winning Viewfinder video called "Troops Deploy Game Ball" by Merrill students Ricky Lasser '16 and Karen Tang '16 also made the final five. It did not go away empty-handed however, as SPJ awarded it the top national honor in the Television Sports Photography category. The long form video was part of a project for lecturer [Bethany Swain's ViewFinder class](#) that went behind the scenes at a DC United soccer game. It has already won numerous other national student journalism awards.

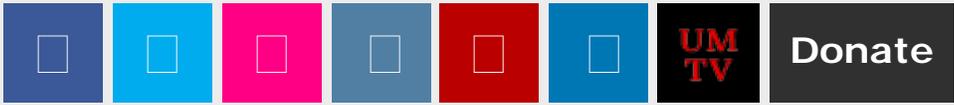




Correction: Lede updated to reflect that the MOEy was awarded last year for the first time.

- [Best of Show](#)
- [Brothel Next Door](#)
- [Capital News Service Maryland](#)
- [CNS](#)
- [MOEy Award](#)
- [Philip Merrill College of Journalism](#)
- [Society of Professional Journalists](#)
- [SPJ Mark of Excellence](#)
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