

Scott Luton ([00:00](#)):

Hey, good morning, Scott Luton with you here on supply chain. Now this is a very special episode of our logistics with purpose series. January is national slavery and human trafficking prevention month. Sadly modern day slavery and human trafficking is not only a horrific crime, but it generates \$150 billion in revenue annually. It happens in every country, every state in the U S and it doesn't discriminate. You can learn a lot more about this issue through this conversation with Laura Sarus of truckers against trafficking, hosted bar friends, and Ricky Alvarez, and Christy Porter with vector global logistics. Hey, have a listen and take the next step as an individual or company to truly make slavery a thing of the past it's time for supply chain. Now, broadcasting live from the supply chain Capitol of the country. Atlanta, Georgia heard around the world supply chain. Now spotlights the best in all things, supply chain, the people, the technologies, the best practices, and the critical issues of the day. And now here are your hosts.

Enrique Alvarez ([01:27](#)):

Well, good day and welcome once again to another incredible show of the, a series logistics with purpose powered by vector global logistics. I'm really excited to be the host today. It's going to be a very interesting and engaging conversation with a really amazing host. I also a guest and I also have my cohost Christie with me, Christie, how are you doing today?

Kristi Porter ([01:52](#)):

Good. I'm excited for the conversation.

Enrique Alvarez ([01:54](#)):

I'm really excited about that due on before we actually introduce our, our guests. Uh, let me just remind everyone that's listening to this podcast or watching it on YouTube or any other channels that you can subscribe for free it's available in any podcast platform that you might have, and we don't want to lose the opportunity to talk to two amazing people, and you don't want to lose the opportunity to listen to what they have to say. Thank you once again for joining supply chain now in this series, logistics with purpose and, um, go ahead, Christie, who do we have with us today?

Kristi Porter ([02:30](#)):

Yeah, today we have, um, Laura Cyrus with truckers against trafficking. Uh, she is the director of corporate engagement and they do an incredible work over there. I've been a fan of them for a really long time and they're leaders in the anti-trafficking space and have such a unique nation view on the industry and the issue. So I'm really excited to hear what they have to say. So Laura, we were really excited to introduce our audience to you and truckers against trafficking. Yeah. Thank you so much for having on to represent

Laura Cyrus ([03:00](#)):

The Oregon, really excited to be here and speak with you guys. I think it will be a fun conversation.

Enrique Alvarez ([03:05](#)):

Thank you so much. Uh, what, I mean, we had a pre meeting before the sun. It was incredible to find out so many things that you are doing and the impact that you're having in, in just the, the entire country

and probably around the world. It's amazing. So thank you so much, not only for being here, but for doing what you're doing and for being who you are. Thank you so much.

Laura Cyrus ([03:29](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah, it's a, it's, it's a, it's a calling for me personally, so I'm, I'm happy to be here. Yeah.

Enrique Alvarez ([03:35](#)):

And we're definitely going to find out a little bit more about that calling cause right on cue. That's kinda like where I wanted to start. Why don't you tell us a little bit more about yourself, a couple of anecdotes from your earlier life and the things that kind of brought you to the, to where you are now.

Laura Cyrus ([03:50](#)):

Yeah. Oh goodness. Where does anyone start? Right. Like I think, and I love to kind of preface that by just saying, I think, um, everybody has such a unique story and a unique opportunity to bring something to the world that nobody else can. And, you know, sometimes it takes a little while to find out what that is or to really kind of maximize the, the nexus of career and passion and all that. And some people never find that, but I am grateful to at least for now be, be in that, that sweet spot. So yeah. What about me? Um, I grew up in Michigan and, you know, I dunno it was the first porn, uh, of my family. And I think that that kind of played a role into kind of how I approach life and sort of the, the attitude and work ethic maybe that I, that I have, but growing up, you know, I was really grateful.

Laura Cyrus ([04:42](#)):

And I think learning even as an adult come to realize how much you didn't know as a young person, right. And was really, really grateful to have the family situation that I did, um, just really lovely family. And that, that served me very well throughout many instances in my life. But you know, I'm into music, I studied dance and orchestra and band and choir and musical theater. And so that, that sort of artistic vein is something that I certainly recreationally and end that kind of was where I thought I was headed in life, was sort of down that, that path. I had no previous experience within transportation or logistics or any of that. And I'm still absolutely learning every day, um, when it comes to this specific industry. But, you know, I had an interesting thing happened to me when I was in my early college years that really, I think, shaped the trajectory of my life and allowed me to experience the criminal justice system, uh, specifically from the perspective of a victim.

Laura Cyrus ([05:50](#)):

And it was that, that experience that really shifted my focus from, you know, thinking I might do something within musical theater or something like that to really, uh, just being aware of the hurt and, um, the survival stories out there of so many different people, women, especially that's, that's where I started to, to kind of bend towards women's issues. And so I started studying criminal justice and through that experience, you know, I think really started down this path. It's, it's funny looking back in life, right? Like the moments where you don't think it's defining at the time, but you realize like, okay, that was a true fork in the road. And if I had gone left, instead of right, you know, I might've been some work different, but that really set me on this path and started to learn about so many different things. But so I actually did not start learning about human trafficking, um, until I heard a missionary speak about the issue and, you know, it was funny, but I heard her speak about her organization overseas.

Laura Cyrus ([07:04](#)):

And, you know, she was just kind of globally talking about the problem and the issues of, you know, textile work and forced labor and production of chocolate and rubber and coffee and all of these things that I just had never considered, just never considered who was producing those things that I was consuming. And it really, I don't know something happened to me that night. It floored me. I was like, okay, I have to do something in this, in this genre. I don't know what that's going to be or how I'm going to get there. But I knew that night that I needed to do something in the field of anti-trafficking,

Enrique Alvarez ([07:36](#)):

It's incredible that someone kind of thought, um, I mean, someone that you met for a short period of time could have so much impact in your life and you actually, you acted upon it and, and you literally shifted the entire career that you had kind of imagined up until then to something, something completely different. And, and if you don't mind that just go slightly back towards, you're still living in Michigan, still kind of trying to pursue this acting or a artsy arts career that you had. And what other mentors do you remember any kind of mentors that kind of shaped you, shaped you as an individual?

Laura Cyrus ([08:12](#)):

Yeah. So funny story in between the time of right. Kind of going down this road of criminal justice hell is a very interesting period of time. And I, so when I was in college, this experience that I had anyway, it is such a long story, but I ended up withdrawing from university because I actually was teaching at a band camp. I, yeah. So teaching drum line drum line, I play drum line instrument. I would not call myself a drummer, but yes, that was my main instrument. Yes. Um, and so I was teaching at this band camp and it was the height of summer and the mosquitoes were really bad that year. And I ended up getting West Nile and I did not know initially that I, that I had contracted West Nile, but I was really sick. And then I kind of got better. And then I got really, really sick and I ended up going into the hospital and I actually also had viral meningitis.

Laura Cyrus ([09:11](#)):

And this was like, I cannot explain to you the, just the sheer sort of like moment of feeling like everything in life was going wrong. But I was kind of recovering from this traumatic situation that I had happened to me was recovering from literally not being able to get out of bed because of these viral infections. And I was really lost in terms of what I was going to do next. And so at this time, this all weaves together at this time, I actually got a job. I, again, withdrew from university, but got a part-time job, helping to manage the psychology practice of a local psychologist. And he ended up being just one of the best mentors I have ever had. And so anyway, started helping him manage this practice, handled medical billing, and like all kinds of random

Enrique Alvarez ([10:03](#)):

And sorry to contribute again. When you remember, this is such a fascinating story and it has so many different turns. And do you remember anything that he kind of like taught you in particular? Was there some kind of, he always told you or

Laura Cyrus ([10:16](#)):

Yeah, so his, his whole approach to life was really to consider optimism and that you are not born an optimist or a pessimist. Nobody is born, you know, one way or the other. It's actually a choice that all of us make on a daily basis. And some days it's easier to choose optimism and some days it's not, but that, you know, we, we have a choice to how we react to our environment. We can't always, and I, I can

attest to that. You can't always control. What's going to happen to you, right? You can't control. What's going to happen to you and most in most cases, but you can control your response, your reaction, your emotion. And again, sometimes that's easier than others, but with that sort of mindset and attitude, you can keep moving forward through so much. And so can you,

Enrique Alvarez ([11:03](#)):

That's super powerful by the way. And I feel like we're all kind of like, uh, aware of that after the year that we've had in the 2020, right? No one, no one expected anything of what we experienced, but, but you're right. So you choose to be an optimist is what you would get out of him.

Laura Cyrus ([11:18](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And that, you know, I was putting so much pressure on myself at the time, right. Getting close to graduating college, having no idea how I was going to, you know, make any of this work, what am I going to end up? What am I going to retire from someday? Right. Like here I am at 20 years old thinking, I need to have my entire career mapped out, which is such a lie. Right. Nobody, nobody has that. Oh, there's so much pressure. I think that young people put on themselves and that is put on them, but he just here mine me. So like, you know what, one step at a time do the next right thing. You know, you can only, you can only do so much each day and you just have to be true to your values and, and true to your goals and your mission.

Laura Cyrus ([11:59](#)):

And so anyway, throughout this time I ended up going restarting school. So, um, I ended up going back to school, finishing school, graduating, right? Uh, when the economy tanked in 2008 and at the time this psychologist, Dr. Russ, he wanted to retire from clinical psychology practice and wanted to start a business around consulting for workplace culture and, and having a blog and kind of all of these different media avenues for getting this sort of message out about the choice to be an optimist and how that can really the psychological aspects of all this. So I did not get a job in my field. I went on interviews and applied to so many different, different places, but it was that catch 22 of needing to get experienced, but nobody wanted it.

Speaker 5 ([12:51](#)):

You didn't have experience, which I would never get. Right. Yeah.

Laura Cyrus ([12:54](#)):

Yes. So he approached me, my doctor and he said, you know, what, if we co-founded this organization and I need your help in terms of tech and like all of these different things. And would you be interested in doing this? And we could see what happens? And I said, well, sure, let's do it. So we had this business in this office and we ended up having a, a radio show and we produced some video blogs and I built him a website and all of these different things, which at the time were fun. And they were, it was definitely a learning experience for me, but it wasn't really fulfilling. I just was thinking like, this is so rut, you know, I'm having fun. We got to interview lots of different types of people and do so many different cool projects, but it all just felt pretty random. And so anyway, he ended up, um, deciding that he wanted to go back to school and study ministry. And so he went to Duke university to get a master's of divinity, and we folded this business. And at the same time I was feeling like I needed it.

Speaker 5 ([14:02](#)):

Was the business successful or somewhat successful, or you were, it was,

Laura Cyrus ([14:07](#)):

Hey, we never really got out of the startup phase. Um, we were successful in that. We were able to deliver on our mission. We were able to help people. We had, you know, we had all this content, but ultimately he had a change of heart and decided in his final years, he really wanted to, to go and pursue ministry, which was a total change for him. And at the same time I was looking at graduate schools and deciding, okay, you know, this is, this has all been good. And it's been an interesting experience, but I'm ready to sort of take the next step in my career into what I feel I'm called to do. And so I started researching graduate programs and I found this program at the university of Denver and applied and got in. And so I moved, packed up from Michigan and moved out to Denver, Colorado, where I started this program. And that's actually how I got connected with truckers against trafficking.

Speaker 6 ([14:59](#)):

Wow. And, um, that's, uh, well, that's a great story and thank you very much once again, for, for sharing.

Kristi Porter ([15:05](#)):

Yeah. It's amazing. Which brings us to your current work. And so I know one of the things that we have talked about offline is, and you've already alluded to all of these winding paths and different skills and everything that led you up to joining them and how they actually came into play after that. So, um, for all of our career seekers out there who are still trying to find their way in the world, would you describe a little bit more about how all of those random skills as you call them, came into play when you, when you started working there?

Laura Cyrus ([15:34](#)):

Absolutely. And I, yeah, just to all of those, right. Newly graduated or career change, or, you know, wherever you are on that path, I would say there's at least I find this to be true. Every experience that you've had, again, coming back to the choice of optimism or pessimism can be either like a springboard or write something that's going to hold you back. And so you have to make a decision. Okay. I had all these random experiences that had nothing to do with what I really wanted. Right. Which was to, to be a part of anti-trafficking work. But in the meantime, I learned all of these different skills that ended up serving me really well at this organization where I came and I rebuilt the website and I have done voiceover work and I have done all kinds of different web and tech related things in order to advance the mission of truckers against trafficking.

Laura Cyrus ([16:24](#)):

And so, you know, coming in to that, you know, I was at, we were, we were still scaling and growing. It was our executive director, Kendice Paris and her sister who is our deputy director, Kyla linear. It was really the two of them. And Kyla was a full-time teacher at the time, and then myself as an intern. And so we write to our founder's credit. I mean, we're very mission centric and we're able to scale and grow in a sustainable way. But all of those things that I thought were random ended up serving me so well within this new position. And so my advice to anybody, whether you're in supply chain logistics or anything like that is just to, just to take inventory of all of those experiences, because if you are open and right, if you work hard and your intentions are good, there's a way to make all of that random stuff in life work and be useful, not only to you, but to the people you serve and the organizations you work for.

Kristi Porter ([17:20](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. And I also second having a friend or mentor who is a psychologist or counselor or a therapist, because you can never beat free therapy.

Laura Cyrus ([17:31](#)):

Yes, yes. Great.

Kristi Porter ([17:33](#)):

So before we get into your specific mission, for those who don't know, talk just a little more about the issue of human trafficking and its role in the world, unfortunately, and just how big the issue is, and kind of give us an overview for those who aren't as plugged into that. Yeah. So

Laura Cyrus ([17:50](#)):

Even though state sanctioned ownership of another human being is, is no longer legal anywhere in the world, it is still happening. And human trafficking is what we would call modern day slavery. It is estimated that there are 40 million people around the globe. I'm enslaved in the world today. Human trafficking generates \$150 billion a year annually and illicit profits. Um, the national hotline here in the United States, national human trafficking hotline reports that this crime is taking place in every single state. There is no zip code that is immune from this crime, disproportionately women and girls of color become victims of this crime. And we know that any type of vulnerability, whether it's our kids or people experiencing homelessness or job loss or food insecurity or children, especially in foster care, or that are runaways are in the LGBTQ community, right? Anytime you have a vulnerability, you are unfortunately a prime target for traffickers.

Laura Cyrus ([18:50](#)):

And so we know that this crime is happening to men and women, but it's also happening to children. The national hotline actually reports that some victims may be forced to have sex up to 20 times a day. And that is an absolutely sobering thought. I think anybody who's listening or watching this episode, you know, we all know somebody who has been a victim of sexual assault, unfortunately, because that is so prevalent. And just to think about what that one incident, uh, did to that person, how it just appended their life and changed everything you think about just that one instance, and then imagine that happening to you 20 times a day for weeks or months or years on end. And that is the level of trauma that these, these victims are having to endure. You know, in terms of human trafficking that is mostly focused on the sex trafficking issue, but we cannot ignore labor trafficking, right?

Laura Cyrus ([19:45](#)):

And so human trafficking is the exploitation of human beings through force fraud or coercion for the purposes of either commercial sex. You can think prostitution, stripping pornography, brothels, uh, most typically pimps or forced labor. So sweat shops, agricultural fields, domestic servitude, construction, restaurant work, nail salons, right? Anytime. Yes. Anytime you have somebody that is, you know, in control of someone else that trafficker that victimizer, they are profiting off of someone else's back that is human trafficking and it is indeed a modern day slavery. And so that kind of gives you an idea of the scope for those that are not familiar, but, you know, that we have an interesting, you know, I dunno, I dunno if anybody listening to this is thinking truckers, what are truckers have to do with anti-trafficking work? That's a question that comes up quite a lot, but we are a Denver-based national anti-trafficking non-profit that is seeking to raise up a mobile army of transportation professionals that are going to

assist law enforcement in the recognition and the reporting of the crime of human trafficking, because that is going to aid in the recovery of victims and the rest of their perpetrators.

Laura Cyrus ([20:57](#)):

We have a whole series of educational material that is industry specific. It's free in 30 minutes or less transportation companies, also bus companies and folks in the oil and gas industry within 30 minutes or less, they can train their frontline workers to recognize this crime and to report it, to know what to do, just helping to, again, aid in the recovery of those victims. Most importantly.

Kristi Porter ([21:23](#)):

Yeah. For sure. And then would you talk a little bit more about exactly what role these, these people play in the industry, what they might be looking for? Kind of give us some of the, I guess, tidbits to pull out of your training and the overview and how specific it gets.

Laura Cyrus ([21:38](#)):

Yeah. So within the trucking industry, right, we know, unfortunately drivers may see this at truck stops, rest areas, hotels, motels, city streets, places of business, where they're delivering loads, they are on the front lines. And unfortunately this crime sometimes does literally come knocking on their doors. And when they're at a rest area or a truck stop somewhere like that, and what drivers need to be looking for, we have two main red flags. The first is any time you see a minor engaged in potentially trying to solicit sex or engage in commercial sex, that is a huge red flag. If you are a minor, you can not consent. And you are a victim of human trafficking. If you're being forced to do this, or any time you see someone under the control of a pimp, regardless of the age or gender of that victim, those are red flags that trafficking may be taking place.

Laura Cyrus ([22:32](#)):

What we ask is that drivers or anybody calls in a tip to the national human trafficking hotline, which that number is one eight, eight, eight three seven three seven eight eight eight, or to local nine one one or, or non-emergency law enforcement. And really what we're asking, we're not asking drivers to intervene in any way. This is really about bystander intervention, right? There are millions of truck drivers out there and the more and more I've, I've spoken to different people throughout my time here at truckers against trafficking. You know, I've, I've talked with drivers, who've been over the road for years and said, you know, I've seen this. I just didn't really know what I was looking at. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know there was anything I could do. I just thought that that person, you know, made bad choices or something, and they were there because they wanted to be there.

Laura Cyrus ([23:24](#)):

And now they have a greater understanding of this crime. The fact that traffickers are counting on all of us, truckers included to think that that person, that that's being sold as is just a prostitute, right. And that we're not going to want to get involved. But the reality is men and women of the transportation industry are some of the best people I've ever met. And they would literally give you the shirt off their back. And so to just get a little bit of training and help them understand what to look for and what to do, they all say, well, I've got kids or I've got nieces or nephews, or I've got grandkids, or I don't have any of that, but I care about people. Right. Um, and so I'm absolutely willing if all you're asking me to do is, you know, learn some signs, make a phone call, I'm willing to do that. Right. So that's really what

Kristi Porter ([24:10](#)):

Brian off. So of course has the opportunity to text. I believe there's an app now. It's really easy for people to report. Cause the other two tricky aspects of that are a lot of times people don't see themselves as victims because they were just sort of lured into this through a relationship. And, um, you know, if you said, is that your pimp, that's also not a word they would typically use. It's boyfriend, girlfriend, something like that. So it's always better to report it and be wrong than not report in one year later. So your company has also, or your nonprofit is also really interesting because it's female founded in a male dominated industry. So talk a little bit more just about how the fruition of the organization overall.

Laura Cyrus ([24:47](#)):

Yeah. That's so great. So we have, it's funny because people will write us not, not so much anymore, but oftentimes when they would write our general inbox, they would say, dear SIRS,

Speaker 7 ([24:58](#)):

Just not even one. Yeah.

Laura Cyrus ([25:01](#)):

Should we do what we do have, we do have a man on our staff, but okay.

Speaker 7 ([25:05](#)):

One. Yeah. But,

Laura Cyrus ([25:07](#)):

Uh, yeah, so the Genesis of tat is really brilliant. So our, one of our co-founders, her name is Lynn Leeberg and she read a book by a man called David Batstone named David Batstone called not for sale. And when she read that book, she was floored. She wanted to do something. And so she gathered her four daughters who are all amazing and justice minded and just amazing human beings. And she said, we have to do something about this. And so their family had a small ministry called chapter 61 ministries, and they decided to put together this anti-trafficking awareness conference or event. And so they, this happened in Denver, they brought in speakers from all over. One of the speakers was, um, an FBI agent. And he was mentioning that truck stops were one of the places that they had found minor victims. And he kind of went on to talk about, you know, what, if we could train gas station employees or, you know, all these people sort of this, this idea of bystander intervention and Lynn had this light bulb moment because as a child, her parents owned and operated a small motel and their best clients were truckers.

Laura Cyrus ([26:14](#)):

And it was, you know, small enough of a motel that her mom would set out continental, continental breakfast for the guests every morning. And so Lynn had this, this understanding of truck drivers as being family-oriented, you know, she had the inside scoop, right, as a young girl being around these, these drivers. And so she had this idea, you know, what, if we could train truckers who are already vigilant, they're already observant. There's millions of them over the road. What if we could train them to understand the signs and then to act, uh, what, you know, what might happen. And so anyway, tat really took off the ministry, folded truckers against trafficking became its own five Oh one C3

organization. And really we have skilled and grown from there. We're now working in the bus industry. So both transit Trailways, like cross-country buses, as well as school bus.

Laura Cyrus ([27:06](#)):

We have training specific to those industries. We're working in oil and gas. We have our empower freedom program, which speaks to the oil and gas industry. We've replicated our model in Mexico. We've rolled out that Canada. You know, we do in-depth training for law enforcement on the victim centered approach and helping law enforcement understand, um, just the need to be sensitive when they're working with victims of human trafficking, how to best prosecute, how to interdict, right? All of these different, different avenues of training that, that have just blossomed and grown, unfortunately out of a need. But also I think the exciting thing about that is that these industries have really latched on to this idea and said, this is something we can do. We should do. And we will do. It's not hard to get involved in this work. It's a very low threshold, right?

Laura Cyrus ([27:54](#)):

It's industry specific, it's free. It takes less than 30 minutes. And I think what's more exciting than even we've trained a million people, which is so exciting. That is incredible. Thank you beyond that is just seeing the ripple effect and, and helping professionals in trucking companies or shippers or manufacturers or law enforcement, whoever it is. Not only can they affect change professionally within their, their professional sphere, but personally as well, we are helping to educate so many moms and dads about human trafficking and the fact that they need to talk to their kids and, you know, be looking out for this or that. And I think for me, I, I mentioned this in our discovery call that we had, but I like to think of myself as a Firestarter and to get other people within organizations, so excited about this work and help them catch the vision of what we're trying to do.

Laura Cyrus ([28:53](#)):

And that it really aligns very neatly with whatever their businesses and get them so excited about this, that then they go and they go into their company and say, Hey, this is something I think we need to do. And they get others excited. Then those people get other people excited and they tell this to their families. And you just, it's a never-ending ripple effect. And one just point of encouragement, which is not necessarily related to this work, but to all of us, I think we have a tendency to just get tunnel vision sometimes into what, what project we're working on or whatever it is, issue at home or whatever. And we fail to consider some times just the impact that we can have. Right. And if I could give any encouragement to anybody listening, it would be that you matter, you have a voice, you have the ability to make change in whatever sphere of influence you have. And we may never know, right? Like we're now where we are not ever going to know all of the success stories that have come from this work or all of the calls that have been made or all of the lives that have been changed, but it's worth it. And it's okay that we don't know because at the end of the day, that ripple keeps becoming bigger and bigger and bigger, and that's how change is affected. So,

Enrique Alvarez ([30:07](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And the more you give, the more you get and just bang things forward, I think it actually has big, big benefit. Not only to the cost that you're trying to support, but then also to you selfishly as an individual. And I wanted to ask you, like, after helping so many, so many people, and of course you're helping everyone, what has the organization, or that helped you with? I mean, how have you, I guess, evolved or improved as a human being as a consequence of giving forward or helping?

Laura Cyrus ([30:40](#)):

So, I mean, professionally there's, there's so many ways I have grown. I mean, like I said, I started as an intern. I've done the mailroom I've done.

Enrique Alvarez ([30:48](#)):

How long ago was that? By the way? Well, 2013 was when I started 13. Wow. So it's a pretty young organization if you,

Laura Cyrus ([30:56](#)):

We celebrated our 10th year in 2019. Yeah. So we're still, we're still pretty young. Um, but, uh, you know, I I've had a chance, okay. This is a good one because of my personal experience that I had, this traumatic event, I have worked to overcome claustrophobia, like none other, and for 10 years, I did not get on an airplane because I was just too overcome with anxiety and fear thinking about being trapped in a metal tube, up in the air for X number of hours, whatever. But I had the opportunity to start traveling to trucking shows and all of these different places. And it really came to a point where I knew that I could help to share this message and that my fear was holding me back personally and professionally. And so it really was through the encouragement of our executive director and our team.

Laura Cyrus ([31:49](#)):

And just thinking again, thinking about how, how can I keep taking this message forward that I was able to say, okay, I'm at least willing to get on a plane. I'm not going to say I'm going to enjoy it, but I'll get on the plane and I'll go wherever. Well, I have to tell you, unfortunately, COVID has derailed my aviation, my newfound love for aviation, but, you know, in 2019, I think I was flying two or three times a month, all over the nation, speaking at conferences, helping to get stakeholders involved in while I would say, I still don't necessarily enjoy it. It's easy to get on a plane. And that has been huge for me. So there are these professional, you know, professional advancements that I've made. But I think personally, I also work alongside survivors of this and hearing their stories, seeing how they have turned something so into a positive outcome and being able to train others and educate others has been just very rewarding for me.

Laura Cyrus ([32:47](#)):

And that's why I do the work right, is for all those people out there that just need somebody to step in or to make a call or to give them a chance, right. To recognize that each person has dignity has a story, has a purpose. And together by itself, that is not going to solve the issue of human trafficking. We're not going to put a stop to it on our own, but we are one organization, part of a larger web that is working to combat this crime in many different ways. And it's just one piece of right. The, the modern issues that all of us are dealing with. So, um, we all have a little piece of a bucket to carry, and it's just up to us to, to carry that bucket, to keep throwing water on these fires and eventually put them out.

Kristi Porter ([33:32](#)):

Yeah, for sure. And while we're on the more positive side of this deep dark issue, do you have a couple of one or two success stories you can share? Absolutely. So

Laura Cyrus ([33:42](#)):

One that I would share is we actually have a video of this. If you go to our YouTube page, you can check out our be a change-maker video, but there was an RV that pulled into a Truckstop parking lot a couple of years ago. And there was a truck driver who was also parked at that truck stop parking lot. And he noticed this RV notice that it looked kind of beat up out of place, but he just kind of kept going about his paperwork, whatever he was doing and decided, you know, I don't know if it's really something suspicious or not. Well, he looked up again and he thought he saw a young woman peek her head out of the window of that RV only to have a black curtain push in its place and a commotion and suicide that he knew he had to make the call.

Laura Cyrus ([34:25](#)):

And so he made the call to state troopers showed up, we're able to interview the occupants of that vehicle, Laura Sorensen and elder Hoda, um, who said that they were on vacation in the area visiting her daughter. And there was this, third-party this young woman inside of that RV. And she looked disheveled malnourished. She wouldn't make eye contact with anybody, but at some, at some point of that conversation, she looked at one of the troopers and bugged her eyes out. Like, please help me get me out of this situation. Thankfully, that trooper picked up on that cue asked to speak with that young woman outside of the RV. As soon as the door was closed, as she began to weep, she said that she had been kidnapped out of the state of Iowa. A couple of weeks prior had been forced to prostitute at various locations.

Laura Cyrus ([35:12](#)):

Again, ending up at that truck. Stop in Virginia that same day, she had been forced to perform sex acts, not only on Aldair Hoda, one of her traffickers, but also another unknown male inside that RV at the truck stop. When doctors would later evaluate her at the hospital, they told state police investigators that had she not been separated from her traffickers that day, she would have died within 24 to 48 hours just due to the, of the severe trauma and torture truly that she had been experiencing. This is a bit graphic, but I mean, they were heating up metallic instruments on the stove of that RV and inflicting wounds on her body. Spring chlorine bleach into those wounds. We talk about coercion being one of the tools that traffickers use to keep their victims under control. They had actually slit a dog's throat in front of that young lady and made her watch that animal bleed out and die and said, if you don't do what we're telling you to do, this is going to be you.

Laura Cyrus ([36:07](#)):

And this is going to be your family. So thankfully she was recovered, um, that day and is now safe and back home with her family. And she calls Kevin, her guardian angel. And I'm really proud to say that he calls himself a trucker against trafficking. And that's just one of so many stories, you know, I, I could go on with others, but I think we just have to remember again, one phone call. You don't have to be right. That's the other thing, anybody that's listening to this podcast, you don't have to be a trucker. You know, you don't really have to know much. It's just, if you see any of these red flags, which I would encourage you to download our app truckers against trafficking on any app platform, it's free, it's interactive there's case studies, red flags, all kinds of information. But when you call that hotline, you can just tell them, Hey, this is what I think I'm seeing.

Laura Cyrus ([36:55](#)):

And this is why was there a, a car or a van that pulled into a truck stop parking lot. And now all of a sudden three or four girls or women get out and they start going truck to truck knocking on doors. Does

it look like there's somebody in control of those people? Right? There's, there's so many things that maybe independently, aren't like, Oh, that's definitely trafficking, right? But if, if you start to see a pattern or if you start to see multiple signs, call the hotline, they have said, we would rather people call and be wrong than not to call. Right. And, and have that victim continue to endure a life of, of slavery.

Kristi Porter ([37:33](#)):

So yes. Thank you for that. Um, always good to hear good news at the end of some of this. So you've talked about the trainings, have the app. I knew you also have a podcast there. Tell us a little bit about that and if there's any other, any of those other ways that people can engage with you,

Laura Cyrus ([37:51](#)):

Our podcast is called driving freedom and it is available on any major podcast platform. You can also find it on our website and it is, our episodes are short. They're 20, 20 to 30 minutes. They're meant to be content rich training opportunities specifically for drivers, right, with, with drivers in mind, but anybody can listen and learn more about this work and how they might be able to spot human trafficking as well. So I would encourage you to check that out, driving freedom. The other thing just within this, you know, potentially some of your other listeners, one of my major roles in projects is with our shipping partners program. And that leverages the preexisting relationships that shippers or manufacturers with the trucking companies that they contract with to move their goods. And so, uh, the shipping partners program allows, uh, right, like, uh, corporate social responsibility or sustainability departments, as well as logistics and transportation to work together and say, Hey, this anti-trafficking training actually really neatly aligns with our corporation's interest in human rights and our sustainability goals and, and all of these things.

Laura Cyrus ([39:02](#)):

And so what it does is it allows them to bring this message to their carriers and say, Hey, anybody that moves product for us, we would love for you to consider training all your folks in this free awareness material. And so what we found is that it really helps to activate the supply chain for social good through one easy step, asking your carriers, if they're trained, if they're not trained, giving them an introduction to this work, we've had some of our folks, if you search shipping partners program, our website should come up or you can find it on our list of programs@truckersagainsttrafficking.org. If you check out that shipping partners program page, you will see some logos of some really large companies that you will absolutely know and identify. You can click on those logos and read case studies for how we have engaged together, how we've worked together to help spread this message throughout their organization.

Laura Cyrus ([39:58](#)):

And then of course, the carriers that they're contracting with. So there is room for everybody to get involved in this, follow us on social media, ask for our social media tool kit. We have a beautiful new tool kit that we can send out to folks in the industries that has pre-written tweets and graphics and impact stories and all these different things that you can use to build out your social media content, helping us spread the word, follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, you know, we're always putting out articles and resources and just information to help people understand more about this issue and how they can get involved. Yeah.

Enrique Alvarez ([40:33](#)):

I just wanted to say that. I mean, when we talk about logistics all the time, this is of course, a logistics driven and focused to podcast, and I've never heard anything so simple to do, right. And logistics, we're shipping things all over the world. We're transporting goods. We're actually fighting coronavirus. We're really out there. There's an incredible community. And again, if you're listening, if you're watching this, it's a 30 minute free program that would certify you and your company to do something that it's probably more important than anything else that you're doing. And logistics, I mean, delivering products are important, but saving lives are definitely more important. And I, it just sounds so easy, right? It's, it's really just take the course contact you, contact your organization and, and start helping. It sounds like,

Laura Cyrus ([41:22](#)):

Yeah, that's, that is it. We wanted it to be simple. It needed to be an easy lift, right? For companies to get involved. It's not only the right thing to do, but it's, it's, it's easy. And we have kinds of resources, posters, wallet, cards, decals, brochures, all kinds of stuff that we will send to you free of charge. We have of course, tons of digital resources. I have a great little packet of material called ways to engage. And so if you are right moving product or contracting the movement of goods, get in touch with me. And I'd love to share that with you. It will just maybe give you some ideas for how you can get involved. In addition to, right, obviously implementing the training or asking carriers to implement the training. You can create anti-trafficking and persons policy with a demand reduction focus. So look at some of the employment policies that you have.

Laura Cyrus ([42:14](#)):

Do you have something specific to anti-trafficking on your books, if not come and talk to us, we have some sample language that really would, would help to build out sort of an employment handbook, uh, as it relates to anti-trafficking work, there are so many ways to get involved corporate sponsorship or helping us get into new industries or niche industries, always looking to expand the partners that we're working with. And we rely on our partners to help us spread the word, which is again, thank you so much for having me on your podcast. Of course, donations are always welcomed. Innovation can continue. Yes, yes, absolutely. Yeah. That's something that is essential in the, okay.

Enrique Alvarez ([42:55](#)):

So also something you can do through the website, I imagine, right. Just go donate through the website. If there's a large donation, they want to talk to you or someone else. Yeah. Just contact you as well. And we'll put all those different links and all the different information that you have mentioned and shared with us today in the description of this podcast. And we'll continue to support you. I actually took a lot of notes kind of, as you were going through the different things and also vector, we actually definitely going to have to go and revisit our employee handbook after this conversation with you and make sure that we're not only compliant because that's really not the main thing. It's a, we should probably aim at something higher than just that. Right. Just trying to go out there and, and help. And again, it's so 30 minute video, we spend 30 minutes and so many other things that are definitely less important and worth our while. So yeah.

Laura Cyrus ([43:47](#)):

And for anybody who's multitasking during your orientation, which is most of us, especially these days. So give us just the top, a couple of things that would be most helpful to you guys right now. Yeah, absolutely. Um, I think start follow us on social media. Um, you can share our posts that will help give you an idea of ways that you can get involved. Second is I really would encourage everybody to visit our

website truckers against trafficking.org. Our training video is right there on our homepage. You have to scroll down just a bit. Start by watching that film. It will not only be a continuing education on the topic of human trafficking for you, but it will give you an idea of where you might fit within this greater conversation. And then third, think right, if you are contracting with folks moving product, please reach out to me.

Laura Cyrus ([44:37](#)):

Let's have a discussion about how you might be able to leverage your influence or help us spread the word in any way. You know, we work with so many different folks all over these various industries. And if there's one thing you take away from this it's that you can make an impact, whether you become trained and you recognize human trafficking, and one day you call the hotline, right? That could be a way, or if you've listened to all of this and you say, Hey, I think that there really might be some opportunity for my organization to get involved with this work. I'm going to reach out and have a conversation. Please do. I am just as talkative and bubbly on my exploratory brainstorming calls that I have with partners as I am on this podcast. So you will not be bored, but that's really the favorite part of my job is just helping people understand that you can make an impact. You absolutely can both personally and professionally. Awesome. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you for having me really appreciate it.

Enrique Alvarez ([45:36](#)):

It has been a pleasure and thank you so much again, not only for the time that you have given us, but for what you do on what everyone else at your organization is doing police on our behalf, tell them that we appreciate what they're doing, and it's incredibly important. And we're going to be very supportive now that we actually have found you and a, and we'll definitely help you with everything you asked us to do. And I encourage everyone listening and watching again, just to take the time, right? Just as care. It's something that doesn't take much, it's entirely free. It's part of what you guys are already doing out there, because it's not like you're going to be changing any processes or anything like that. It's just, it's a hotline it's being attention. It's being certified. And for all the clients, all the people out there that are actually contracting logistic providers like vector and others to move their freight. Why don't you just make sure that if you're giving business to someone you're giving it to the company that has a purpose behind it, and that kind of cares about things like, like this that are incredibly important for our society, especially this days.

Laura Cyrus ([46:43](#)):

Yeah. Final thought I would say is we like to end all of our presentations this way. And it's, you know, we all want to make a difference in the world. I think most people do. They want to leave a legacy throughout their career. They want to do something that makes a difference. And not everybody is in a position to do that as it relates to this work. But anybody in transportation or logistics absolutely is because it's right here. It's like you just said, 30 minutes, free, easy. We will work with you. And I think it just, it gives us a chance again, to give back, to do something and to do something that matters beyond just the bottom line. So we thank you so much for the time and the exposure and for everybody that or watched, thank

Speaker 8 ([47:30](#)):

You again for being interested enough to listen to what we had to say.

Enrique Alvarez ([47:34](#)):

I have absolutely nothing else do thank you very, very much for listening to this episode of logistics, with purpose, and thank you so much, Laura, for being here. If you don't mind, we would love to kind of have you come back, uh, and tell us a little bit more about what you do as well as some of the plans that you have for this year in the future. And once again, thank you and congratulations for the success.

Speaker 8 ([47:57](#)):

Thank you.