

NEWS RELEASES

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Services

Human Trafficking
Compliance

White Collar, Internal
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Professional

CYNTHIA L. CORDES

KANSAS CITY:

816.983.8000

CYNTHIA.CORDES@

HUSCHBLACKWELL.COM

Cynthia Cordes Receives 2013 Pathbreaker Award

An estimated 100,000 American children are exploited through sex trafficking every year in the United States. To recognize a national leader in the fight to end sex trafficking, Shared Hope International will present one of its three 2013 Pathbreaker Awards to Husch Blackwell Partner Cynthia L. Cordes. Cordes recently joined the firm's Government Compliance, Investigations & Litigation team and is based in Kansas City, Mo. She has prosecuted more human trafficking cases than any assistant U.S. attorney in the country.

The fourth annual Sharing the Hope Gala and Pathbreaker Award ceremony is being held Nov. 8, 2013, at the historic Sphinx Ballroom at Franklin Square in Washington, D.C. It is the culmination of the three-day Sharing the Hope Conference, attended by 600 people representing current and former members of Congress, law enforcement agencies, private businesses and victim-service providers, such as medical providers, shelters and other non-profit agencies. Cordes will serve as a keynote speaker at the conference.

Throughout the past decade as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Missouri, Cordes' pioneering work involved some of the most complex and contested criminal litigation cases in the history of the U.S. Department of Justice. She is well known for her innovative techniques and aggressive prosecutions, which have garnered bipartisan praise before the U.S. Congress. Among her groundbreaking achievements, Cordes was:

The first federal prosecutor in the United States to use the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to prosecute the customers of sex trafficking victims.

The first federal prosecutor in America to charge an international trafficking enterprise with the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

The first to prosecute the newly enacted fraud-in-foreign-labor contracting statute.

The first assistant U.S. attorney to prosecute a mother with trafficking her own child.

In 2009, Cordes designed and created a unique undercover sting, known as “Operation: Guardian Angel.” In an effort to address the demand of commercial sex trafficking, it specifically targeted the customers who purchase children for sexual acts from traffickers. Her new use of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act has been replicated by districts across the country and affirmed by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. She expanded this new use of the statute in *United States v. Bagley, et al*, which became the first case in the country where the customers of an adult victim also were prosecuted under the TVPA.

Cordes continues to serve as a national icon in the battle against human trafficking. As a part of her work at Husch Blackwell, Cordes partners with prosecutors and law enforcement to accept referrals to represent victims on a pro bono basis. More than 40 partners and associates participate in the program. The commitment to accept all victims referred to the firm marks an unprecedented dedication of pro bono work from a private-sector firm. Additionally, Cordes continues to provide training to law enforcement agencies and companies on the subjects of human trafficking and labor and immigration compliance issues.

Shared Hope International was founded in 1998, by former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith. It is a leader in the worldwide effort to prevent and eradicate sex trafficking and slavery of women and children, focusing on the three strategies of prevention, restoration and justice.