

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Hope Restored in Time for National Human Trafficking
Awareness Day, January 11, 2009**

*Catholic Charities in Oregon Awarded Federal Grant to Provide
Outreach, Advocacy and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking*

Portland, Ore. – **January 6, 2009** – Outreach and Support to Special Immigrant Populations (OSSIP), a program of Catholic Charities, received a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to continue outreach, advocacy and assistance to foreign-born victims of human trafficking. The only program of its kind in Oregon, OSSIP has been helping victims of human trafficking regain control of their lives since 2004.

In the face of high demand, OSSIP had closed its offices for most of 2008 due to lack of funding. Reinstatement of OSSIP services coincides with the second annual National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, January 11, 2009, a resolution passed by the U.S. Senate on June 22, 2007.

“Human trafficking is the second largest – and fastest growing – criminal activity in the world, right behind drug dealing, and it exists right here in Oregon,” said Dennis Keenan, executive director of Catholic Charities in Oregon. “We are doing everything we can to stop this form of modern day slavery in its tracks.”

The U.S. Department of State estimates that upwards of 20,000 men, women and children are trafficked into the United States each year. Victims of human trafficking are induced to work by force or fraud, often under abusive or inhumane conditions. They are typically exploited in the domestic, agricultural and hospitality industries, or in the commercial sex trade where they work as prostitutes or exotic dancers.

“Police officers, social workers and hospital staff can easily identify victims of human trafficking if they are aware of the signs,” said Chris Killmer, OSSIP program coordinator. “Since foreign-born trafficking victims are isolated and usually non-English speaking, it is most common for someone in the emergency services sector to encounter them first.”

The most obvious signs of human trafficking are evidence of controlled behaviors, bruises or history of untreated physical or mental trauma, no passport or other identifying documentation, and extreme fear and distrust of authority figures.

Prior to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, there was no comprehensive federal law in existence to protect victims of trafficking or to prosecute known traffickers. If human trafficking is suspected, citizens are encouraged to call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at (888) 373-7888 or OSSIP at (503) 542-2855.

About Outreach and Support to Special Immigrant Populations (OSSIP)

OSSIP provides comprehensive assistance to foreign-born survivors of human trafficking, including case management and counseling, safe housing, daily necessities such as food and clothing, coordination of outside referrals for social services, access to interpreters, arrangement of medical and dental care, and legal representation for immigration and civil defense matters. OSSIP also trains law enforcement and social, medical and legal service providers to help with identification and needs assessment for trafficking victims. Staff is bilingual. For more information go to <http://www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org> or call the office directly at (503) 542-2855.

About Catholic Charities

Since 1933, Catholic Charities in Oregon has been bringing hope, resources and advocacy to the poorest and most vulnerable throughout the state, regardless of faith, race or condition in life. The organization serves as the professional social service arm of the Archdiocese of Portland, yet is funded completely through grants and donations. Headquartered in Portland at 231 SE 12th Avenue, the organization will move into its new Clark Family Center upon completion in Spring 2010. For more information call (503) 231-4866, or go to www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org.

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Media contacts:

Sherri Phillips, Catholic Charities
(503) 231-4866x113 / sPhillips@catholiccharitiesoregon.org

Kelliann Amico, Amico Public Relations
(503) 224-5486 / kelliann@amicopr.com