

Sex trafficking survivor shares her story with William Woods students

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As a sex trafficking victim and survivor, Sula Skiles explains that not every victim of sex trafficking escapes, and not every survivor can bear to share their story.

But Monday night, Skiles shared hers at William Woods University in front of an auditorium packed with more than 200 students and community members.

The event was hosted by the WWU communications senior seminar class as part of its capstone project. Nanette Ward of the Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition provided assistance and introduced Skiles during the presentation.

"Sula was fantastic," said Murphy McSemek, a communications and equestrian science major and part of the class that sponsored the event. "She captured the huge audience's attention from beginning to end. She did a wonderful job at passing on the importance



Hannah Lindburg/FOR THE FULTON SUN

Sula Skiles shares her story about how she was trafficked and how she escaped. She now utilizes her story of survival to empower others and give people hope.

of the human trafficking issue.

"We were incredibly grateful to have her. I think the students were really able to relate to her, which made

her message even more real for them."

At 20, Skiles received what seemed like an incredible opportunity: A ticket to do modeling work overseas. At

first, it seemed like her big break. But what she didn't pay attention to at the time was that the ticket was one-way.

Upon her arrival abroad,

she was shown to her room at a luxurious estate. In her room, she found her luggage, one bed and the billionaire who offered her the job. He immediately began grabbing at her, and she realized that the room she was staying in was his — and modeling was not the reason she was there.

That night, Skiles and the other young women staying at the estate went to what was supposed to be a modeling event, but was actually just a club. While there, another girl pulled her aside and told her to do whatever the billionaire wanted because she didn't want her to get hurt.

So that's what Skiles did — whatever the man wanted — for three weeks. This meant sleeping with him and whomever else he threw her way and acting like everything was fine.

Skiles recalled having everything she wanted, except her freedom. The young women lived in the most luxurious of accommodations, but they were all trapped. Skiles was actu-

ally told that the billionaire bought her as a Christmas present for himself and his girlfriend.

His girlfriend was the one who eventually provided the opportunity for Skiles to escape. Skiles forged a friendship with the woman, pretending to sincerely care for and love her. She was able to convince the woman to get her a ticket home to take care of personal business. Skiles promised to return, but of course she didn't.

Today, Skiles lives in Jefferson City, is married with a daughter and has a son on the way. She is also a motivational speaker, minister, writer and sex trafficking abolitionist.

She encourages everyone to educate themselves about the issue and become aware of potential dangers, as well as volunteer their efforts whenever possible in the fight to end sex trafficking.

For more information, visit sulaskiles.com. To report a sex trafficking case, call 888-3737-888.