

# Advocate Spotlight Award

**Susie Baldwin, M.D., M.P.H.  
HEAL Trafficking**



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## About Susie Baldwin

Susie Baldwin, M.D., M.P.H. is a Public Health/ Preventive Medicine physician whose career has focused on women's health and human rights. Since 2005, Dr. Baldwin has served as an advocate for survivors of human trafficking, working in Los Angeles as a researcher, trainer, and volunteer clinician. In 2011, Freedom Network USA honored Dr. Baldwin with the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Award for her dedication to the anti-trafficking field in the United States. In 2013, Dr. Baldwin and colleagues launched HEAL Trafficking (Health Professional Education, Advocacy, Linkage), an interdisciplinary network to unify and advance the efforts of health practitioners in the anti-trafficking movement.

Since 2006, Dr. Baldwin has served as Health Assessment Unit Chief at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, where she oversees the LA County Health Survey. Data from the survey are utilized to inform public health program planning, evaluation, policy, and advocacy. She has received the Department's Public Health Excellence Award and the Physician Recognition

Award for Health Equity. Dr. Baldwin has been medical director for Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona and for the California Family Health Council, from which she received the 2014 Family Planning Champion Award, as well as a provider for Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties.

Dr. Baldwin graduated from Columbia University, attended the State University of New York Downstate College of Medicine in Brooklyn, completed an internship in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Arizona Medical Center, and residency at the same institution in Preventive Medicine and Public Health. She completed two research fellowships, one in Cancer Prevention and Control at the University of Arizona Cancer Center, focused on cervical cancer prevention, and one in Women's Health Services Research at the Greater Los Angeles VA and UCLA. She has performed research on identification of human trafficking victims in health care settings, human papillomavirus infection in women and men, access to emergency contraception in California, and on a variety of public health and women's health topics. Dr. Baldwin is a board member of Physicians for a National Health Program – California.



## Q&A

### **What has been the most rewarding aspect of your work?**

It has been incredibly rewarding, through HEAL Trafficking, to connect with passionate and talented health professionals who are doing great work at the intersection of health and human trafficking. In our introductory phone conversations, we found that many people hungered for a network like HEAL, so the endeavor to bring people together was immediately gratifying. Through our network, doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, researchers, and students around the country and beyond are now talking with each other and strategizing about how we move forward together to improve and coordinate the health sector's response to human trafficking. Our list serve connects over 300 people, and our collaborative working groups bring together smaller groups to actively advance our efforts as an organization. Stellar individuals have invested themselves in the leadership of our working groups, and are bringing together knowledge, resources, and unique expertise, always with an eye toward improving the lives of victims and survivors of human trafficking.

### **What has been the greatest challenge to bringing about change in your various social justice endeavors?**

The strength of HEAL Trafficking in representing a geographically diverse group of busy health professionals also presents our greatest challenge. Through technology, we are able to communicate and meet regularly, but scheduling around busy lives and across time zones does present difficulties. Most of us who work in the field of human trafficking wear many hats in our professional lives, so it is also a challenge for our cadre of volunteer professionals to run a burgeoning organization and maintain an up-to-date website. As we move through our second six months of existence, we will focus our sights on sustainability and growth, exploring our options for formalizing our structure and funding our administrative and programmatic agenda.

### **What message would you like to give to your readers?**

I'd like readers to understand that there is a lot that people can do to combat human trafficking, even if their work doesn't directly intersect with the issue. Human trafficking often occurs in industries that employ low-wage workers who are already vulnerable to exploitation. By working to ensure that the people who clean our houses, pick our food, and sew our clothes have rights and are paid a living wage, we can bring more workers out of the shadows and decrease vulnerability to human trafficking. Similarly, by re-allocating society's resources so that we properly care for all children, and support families and communities to reduce the risk for child abuse and neglect, we can make great strides toward reducing child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children.