

# Tackling human trafficking

“You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.”

These words spoken by William Wilberforce are the heart behind the Mosaic Collective, a fair trade shop in Lynchburg.

The shop sells a variety of items like jewelry, tote bags and pottery. Each item is made by artisans who have overcome traumatic situations. They are human trafficking survivors, abuse survivors or refugees.

Jennifer Olson started the Mosaic Collective in 2021 because she wanted to change the narrative

bad relationship with her dad, her boyfriend and her friends were all stepping stones to her being sex trafficked.

Olson recalled thinking “That could have been me.” She began learning everything she could and started holding awareness nights in high school to help other people learn more about human trafficking.

During her sophomore year of college, she started another business called Jars of Hope, where she sold mason jars with soap or candles inside. Olson said 100% of the profit was given to different nonprofit organizations every month.

As she learned more about human trafficking, she realized that survivors often return to their traffickers because they cannot find employment.

“This is crazy because we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on these rescue missions, for what? Because they’re just going back,” Olson said. “We’re not offering solutions.”

This realization led her to discover fair trade shops, and the idea of Mosaic Collective was born.

Olson wanted to create a business that supported survivors, so they could stay free from their traffickers.

“If we don’t have the solutions afterwards, there’s really no point,” Olson said.

and give people a way to make a difference in other people’s lives.

“When you buy something, you’re connecting someone’s story to your own. You’re becoming a part of that story,” Olson said. “Those people in India who are weaving journals from recycled newspapers, every time you buy one, whether you see these people or not, you’re helping transform their lives. That’s another day for them, where they can go and provide for their family.”

Olson’s passion for helping the powerless began when she first heard about human trafficking her junior year of high school.

At school, Olson watched a video of Annie Lobert’s testimony of surviving human trafficking.

Lobert was trafficked in the United States. Olson explained that Lobert’s



Olson launched Mosaic Collective off of her Jars of Hope business in February.

Mosaic’s pottery is made by Prodigal Pottery, an organization in Alabama. The women in the organization came out of homelessness, sex trafficking and domestic abuse. The organization teaches them how to create pottery and helps them learn life skills to empower them to live their lives apart from their trauma.

Olson purchases items from around 30 other organizations who have similar goals as Prodigal Pottery.

During a Fourth of July celebration, she hosted a pop-up shop within Ayven Avenue Boutique and sold a lot of items.

Olson pitched an idea to Ayven’s owner Paige Howell about setting up a small corner of Mosaic items within the store. Howell asked Olson if she wanted the side room of the boutique.

On Sept. 11, Olson opened Mosaic Collective in the space.

Since the opening, Olson has felt surrounded by the Lynchburg community. She moved from New Jersey, where she said people were not as community oriented as she has seen in Lynchburg. She feels like the people and the businesses truly care about helping one another.

“There’s a large focus on community over competition,” Olson said. “It’s been cool to be able to see the ways we can support other nonprofits.”

For more information on Mosaic Collective and how to help stop human trafficking, visit [mosaicco.org](https://mosaicco.org).

**BY CHARITY FITCH**

