

**CONTACTS:**

Trudy Novicki, Executive Director
tnovicki@kristihouse.org
305-547-6836

Mary Faraldo, Community Relations Officer
mfaraldo@kristihouse.org
305-547-6804

DATE: March 15, 2012

Forerunner in combating U.S. commercial sexual exploitation of children to appear at Books & Books

Miami, FL – Kristi House is pleased to welcome Rachel Lloyd Thursday, March 22, 2012, 6:30 p.m. at Books & Books in Coral Gables. A survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and author of ***Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale, an Activist Finds Her Calling and Heals Herself***, Lloyd's ground-breaking program in New York City was one of the first in the nation to address a largely misunderstood and overlooked population of child sexual abuse victims. Her GEMS program served as the model for the Kristi House program, Project GOLD, that has forged new ground in Miami since founding in 2007 and will soon include an emergency shelter modeled after the GEMS program.

The evening will begin with Rachel Lloyd reading an excerpt from ***Girls Like Us*** (Harper Perennial; February 28, 2012; \$15.99 Trade Paperback). A panel discussion will focus on sex trafficking and the tourism industry, demand, our culture that glorifies prostitution, and what this means for children in South Florida. The panel will include Rachel Lloyd; Sandy Skelaney, Program Manager for Kristi House's Project GOLD; Lt. Israel McKee of Miami-Dade Police Department; and Fran Katz of the Women's Fund.

Lloyd's compelling story begins at age 13 when she found herself spiraling into a life of abuse as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Eventually, she was able to escape "the life"—but as the founder of GEMS, she knows all too well that her success story is the exception. In her astonishingly frank memoir, she bravely tells of her own ordeal as a sexually exploited girl, and shares stories from her tireless work with other subjugated girls, drawing much-needed attention to the largely misunderstood epidemic of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S.

Kristi House began developing its model program for commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) in Miami-Dade in 2007, bringing together all the social service, law enforcement and related agencies that come into contact with children living dangerous lives on the streets and under the control of traffickers. Few dedicated services, and no

shelters, exist for these children, many of whom are running away from abusive situations at home or in foster care, and are as young as 11 and 12 years old.

Today, Kristi House's plan to open an emergency shelter and drop-in center for commercially sexually exploited children has received major support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as a Local Funding Partnerships grant program. The project has been matched with local funding support from Women's Fund, Allegany Franciscan Ministries, Health Foundation of South Florida, The Ware Foundation, Paul Palank Memorial Foundation, the Braman Family Foundation, List Family Foundation, Trish and Dan Bell and Eliza and Hugh Culverhouse.

Kristi House CSEC program has focused on bringing the community together around the issue and providing training and awareness building to bring attention to the issue. More than 3,000 professionals have been trained by Kristi House.

The newest Kristi House training initiative in partnership with Miami-Dade County, law enforcement, Miami International Airport and PortMiami targets a weakness and danger existing in airports and seaports where children can be trafficked through by pimps with ease. The training program teaches port personnel how to recognize and identify possible trafficking victims, known to be moved from city to city, and to be trafficked in for major sporting and entertainment events.

About the Author

Rachel Lloyd is the founder and executive director of Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS). She earned her BA in psychology from Marymount Manhattan College, and an MA in applied urban anthropology from the City College of New York. She has received numerous awards, including the prestigious Reebok Human Rights Award. Lloyd is an Ashoka Fellow and a Prime Mover Fellow, and was a leading advocate for the Safe Harbor for Exploited Youth Act, which makes New York the first state to protect, not prosecute, sexually exploited children. She lives in New York City. Visit www.gems-girls.org for more information.

About Kristi House

Kristi House is the Children's Advocacy Center for all of Miami-Dade County and is dedicated to providing a healing environment for child victims of sexual abuse and their families. This approach includes coordinating client families' involvement with legal, medical and mental health systems, limiting the number of interviews to reduce the trauma associated with each retelling of the story, and ensuring that no child falls through the gaps in our complex child welfare system. Kristi House provides a full continuum of wrap-around services and care for victims and their families free of charge including mental health services, critical for recovery from the trauma of sexual abuse for most survivors.

Kristi House's Project GOLD is a specialized program addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children that provides intervention, prevention and advocacy services and help to these previously overlooked sex abuse victims. An emergency shelter and drop-in center will be opened in 2012.

Kristi House is located on the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital campus at 1265 NW 12 Ave. Its south facility is located on U.S. Highway 1 and 152nd Street, and its north facility is located at 18441 NW and 2nd Avenue. Founded in 1996, Kristi House has served more than 8,500 victims of child sexual abuse and their families. Thousands more are reached every year with education and prevention outreach programs. Visit www.kristihouse.org for more details.

###