Chris Schumacher sees education as a major tool in eliminating human trafficking in Central Ohio.

The owner of Schumacher & Associates, a financial advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial, and his wife, Tara, have taken innovative steps to help the victims of human trafficking, said Jennifer Heller, director of development for Ohio State University's College of Social Work. Heller nominated the business for Corporate Caring Award.

The couple sponsors a scholarship for a student who intends to pursue a career that will serve human trafficking victims. They also are funding the creation of curriculum for a class on the issue.

The efforts make a long-lasting impact, Heller said in an email to Business First.

"The College of Social Work is uniquely positioned to address the social challenges of our communities. The generous scholarship support that they provide every year is more than a donation," she wrote. "Through this investment they are not only helping one student, but the dozens upon dozens of individuals and families that this social worker will impact throughout her career."

When the curriculum for the class addressing human trafficking is complete, the university intends to post it online to maximize the impact, Heller said.

"The online curriculum is a fast-emerging way to reach thousands of people who can access iTunes University for free simply by downloading an app to a mobile device. The potential to reach people with the desire to learn about the issue and incorporate it into their practice is exponentially incredible; and with the solid, national reputation of the College of Social Work and Ohio State University behind this curriculum, the possibility for affecting positive change is tremendous," she said. "They are truly visionary to have come to the college to affect the changes that they and we, believe are possible."

Hopefully, the curriculum will help prepare more people to help the victims and raise awareness of the issue, Chris Schumacher said. The general public needs to understand that human trafficking is a version of modern day slavery, he said. The victims, often women and young girls, are forced into labor or the commercial sex industry.

"They are abused in the most horrific ways possible," he said.

The work of the Schumachers is shining a light on how serious the problem of human trafficking is, said Tom Gregoire, dean of the Ohio State University College of Social Work.

The Schumachers truly are making a difference at the college and in the community, he said.

"They're two very special people," he said. "If we had more Schumachers in the world, we would have fewer problems."