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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CALIFORNIA LAUNCHES CUTTING-EDGE PREVENTION  
CAMPAIGN THAT ENGAGES YOUNG MEN TO END SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE**

***The Largest Effort of its Kind, Campaign's Non-Traditional Strategy  
Aims to Empower Young Men, Curb First-Time Perpetration***

**SACRAMENTO, Calif., Sept. 13, 2005** – The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) today unveiled a cutting-edge multi-media and outreach campaign to prevent sexual violence in California that targets young men aged 14-18 and engages them as part of a solution to prevent first-time perpetration. Titled the “MyStrength Campaign,” the multi-million dollar initiative was unveiled at a press conference today at Sacramento High School’s Underground Books store.

As the largest campaign of its kind in the United States, The MyStrength campaign centers around the theme, “My Strength is Not for Hurting,” emphasizing healthy relationships and empowering young men to maintain their strength and masculinity without using coercion, intimidation, force or violence. As a complement to CALCASA’s more than 30 years of work and programs that urge young women to protect themselves from sexual assault, MyStrength takes a unique, non-traditional approach by encouraging men to play a vital role in creating a safe environment for their relationships and reinforces that men can put an end to sexual violence in California.

“The MyStrength Campaign is an important step forward in sexual violence prevention because it proactively engages men as a part of the solution,” said Ellen Yin-Wycoff, CALCASA Interim Executive Director. “The campaign is careful to not blame young men for sexual violence, but rather enlists their help in prevention efforts and encourages them to take responsibility and find solutions. Ultimately, sexual violence can be prevented and men can make a difference in ending rape.”

As a part of the campaign, CALCASA also introduced its Strength Team – a primary vehicle for driving its mission. Consisting of three young men armed with the campaign’s messages and a passion for reaching their peers as part of the prevention effort, the Strength Team will travel throughout California in a campaign-branded Suzuki XL-7 SUV during September and October and meet with young men at local high schools and rape crisis centers to discuss how they can be involved. Actor Dorian Gregory – best known for his roles on TV’s “Charmed,” “Soul Train” and “The Other Half,” as well the movie “Deliver Us >From Eva” – was on hand at the campaign’s launch to introduce the team as its honorary captain and lend his support to the prevention effort.

“The MyStrength campaign and Strength Team are important because they are truly taking sexual violence education to the next level by involving young men in a solution,” said Gregory. “It’s crucial that men demonstrate strength of character in their relationships, rather than apply their strength and masculinity to physical domination and force. By using strength for respect and maintaining healthy relationships, we will make a giant step toward solving this serious issue.”

With funding for the MyStrength campaign made possible by a grant from the California Department of Health Services, the campaign includes a variety of education and sexual violence prevention elements, including:

- **Statewide Advertising Campaign:** The campaign includes a statewide multi-media advertising campaign using radio, print, outdoor/transit and online resources to communicate the MyStrength themes and messages in English and Spanish.
- **MyStrength.org and MiFuerza.org:** The campaign has developed two interactive Web sites in English and Spanish to provide young people a forum to be educated, speak out against, and seek help regarding sexual violence.
- **Rape Crisis Center Training:** CALCASA is providing California’s rape crisis centers with extensive social marketing training, education and materials to increase awareness and the prevention of sexual violence in their communities.
- **Local Market Grassroots Campaigns:** After a competitive review process, six “pilot markets” were chosen to receive grants for additional training, education and marketing events on sexual violence prevention in their cities. Rape treatment centers in these markets will establish Men of Strength (MOST) Clubs at their area high schools, which provide male youth with workshops and opportunities to take leadership roles in sexual violence prevention. The six pilot markets include: Los Angeles, Riverside County, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma County, Weaverville and West Fresno County.

“California leads the country in primary prevention initiatives and the MyStrength Campaign is another example of this leadership,” said Sandra Shewry, director, California Department of Health Services. “The MyStrength campaign has been uniquely shaped to meet the specific needs of California and is in sync with the aggressive approach we have taken toward primary prevention efforts with AIDS, tobacco, obesity and other important health issues.”

The MyStrength Campaign is based on an existing prevention program developed by Washington D.C.-based Men Can Stop Rape, and involves 66 rape treatment centers throughout California. The Campaign helps overcome barriers to sexual violence education by offering resources to underserved communities in California. Students, young men, educators and parents can access educational tools to increase their understanding and involvement in sexual violence prevention. Additional information on this campaign can be found on [www.mystrength.org](http://www.mystrength.org) or [www.mifuerza.org](http://www.mifuerza.org).

**About CALCASA:**

The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) is a statewide organization working to end sexual violence. CALCASA's membership is the 66 rape crisis centers throughout California, Campus-based rape prevention programs, and allied organizations and individuals sharing the mission to end sexual violence. For more information, log onto [www.calcasa.org](http://www.calcasa.org).