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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AWARENESS MONTH
ACTIVITIES**

October is *Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)* and across the country, battered women's advocates are joining elected officials, health care providers, business leaders, police officers, faith-based groups, concerned citizens and many others to organize events and activities that raise awareness about domestic violence. The events range from national campaigns to statewide activities to local community events. While the activities vary in size and costs, the goals of most *DVAM* activities are similar: to raise awareness about the prevalence and cost of domestic violence, the need for prevention and the availability of services for victims of abuse.

The following are examples of *DVAM* activities that were submitted by *Speaking Up* readers. Contact information is included in each event description. Advocates are encouraged to email or call the contact person to find out how to launch similar events or activities in their communities.

Candlelight Vigil

Speaking Up reader Carol Gresham of the Shelter Agencies for Families in East Texas, Inc. (SAFE-T), reports that her organization hosts a candlelight vigil each year, rotating the vigil among the five counties they serve. This year's vigil will take place in Mt. Pleasant, Texas.

The vigils typically include two speakers – a battered woman, clergy member, program provider and/or mayor. The vigils take place in a public place and

start at 6 PM or right before dusk. The ceremony opens with a welcome and an overview of the silent witness program. The program includes seven red cutouts with the names of domestic homicide victims from the community and one unnamed victim. There is also one small cutout for a child.

To increase attendance, Gresham recommends inviting school children to sing two songs appropriate for the ceremony. Immediately following the children's songs, they introduce all of the silent witnesses and light candles. Two weeks before the event, SAFE-T publicizes the vigil in the local newspaper and invites local law enforcement agencies and other groups to attend.

For more information, contact Carol Gresham via email: csgresham@cox-internet.com or via phone: 903/572-0973.

Day of Healing Event

Speaking Up reader John Allison, Community Education Coordinator at Women's Haven of Tarrant County, Texas, reports that Women's Haven is hosting its second annual "Day of Healing" event on October 16–17. The event was developed by the African American Steering Committee and "this year's event promises to be bigger and better," writes Allison. "In fact, we will hold it over two days to accommodate those who worship on Saturdays."

The brochure for the event reads: "The Day of Healing is an opportunity for Tarrant County churches to unite in independent discussions of the problem of domestic violence. This area-wide event is coordinated with church

leaders to educate their congregations about domestic violence and to reach out to members who may be in need of assistance... participating clergy will provide information and resources through sermons about the problem of domestic violence."

For more information, contact John Allison via email: at jallison@womenshaven.org or via phone: 817/535-6462, ext. 240.

Flowers on the Lake

Speaking Up reader Ann Polak of the Calcasieu Women's Shelter in Lake Charles, Louisiana, reports her organization sponsors an annual event in October honoring survivors and women who have lost their lives as a result of domestic violence. The event, "Flowers on the Lake," includes a short program at sunset after which participants throw flowers into the lake in honor of domestic violence victims.

The program usually includes a song that is meaningful, a poem read by a survivor and/or a child, or both, and a proclamation by the mayor. During the closing ceremony, participants hold hands and sing or individuals mention the name of a survivor as they throw a bouquet of flowers in the lake.

"As the flowers drift out in the lake they separate and create quite a beautiful picture," writes Polak. "It is a soft, meaningful event that can be formal."

Polak uses the following timeline, although the event can be organized more quickly:

August

- Contact local flower shops and grocery stores for flowers for the event

September

- Contact media (TV, Newspapers, Radio, etc.) about the event
- Prepare the program, assess needed equipment (sound, etc.)
- Get commitment from singer, poet reader, etc.
- Arrange with the Civic Center (City) for use of the grounds
- Arrange for insurance requirements

October

- Pick a date early in the month to bring awareness to *DVAM*
- Create an alternate plan if it rains (under the gazebo)
- Select allies to assist with the attendance

For more information, contact Ann Polak via email: annpolak@ntwo.net or via phone: 337/436-4552.

Hospital Training Workshops

Speaking Up reader Sandra Becker, Executive Director of Help and Emergency Response, Inc. in Portsmouth, Virginia, reports that the Maryview Medical Center in Portsmouth has asked her organization to conduct three one-hour training workshops on domestic violence for all hospital departments. The "What Every Medical Professional Should Know About Domestic Violence" trainings will be held on October 26, 27 and 28, at varying times, in order to accommodate all hospital employee shifts. All participants will be eligible to receive training units.

The goal of the training is to motivate health care professionals to improve their response to domestic violence victims and their families. The sessions will focus on: establishing domestic violence as a primary health issue facing patients, their families and health practitioners; presenting an overview of the myths and truths about domestic violence; identifying physical

presentations of domestic abuse to victims; illustrating the importance of developing and implementing appropriate timing of questions and resulting responses to domestic violence victims; and making available appropriate information on available services to victims of domestic violence.

Although the trainings are not mandatory, the administrative staff is strongly encouraging hospital employees to attend one of the three sessions. In addition, the hospital's marketing department is asking employees to donate old cell phones to local shelters, which will forward the phones to cell phone companies and receive approximately \$3 to \$4 for each.

For more information, contact Sandra Becker via email: sanbecker@her.hrcmail.com, or via phone: 757/485-1445.

Reach for Peace

Speaking Up reader Nicki Richon-Schoel, Director of Community Outreach at Help for Abused Women and their Children (HAWC) in Salem, Massachusetts, reports that on October 1, representatives of her organization will travel by bus from Salem to Lynn, Gloucester and Ipswich to join local officials for short programs launching *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* in each community. HAWC provides services to battered women and their children on the North Shore of Boston, covering 23 cities and towns.

The bus tour includes a display of HAWC's Reach for Peace art project, a flag constructed from more than 1,000 separate peace flags created and signed by people from all across the North Shore who are committed to bringing peace into their homes and communities. The bus tour will begin at 9:15 AM at the North Shore Medical Center in Salem and continue to

Lynn City Hall, Gloucester City Hall and Ipswich High School.

For more information, contact Nicki Richon-Schoel via email: nicolers@helpabusedwomen.org or via phone: 978/744-2299, ext 16. More information about HAWC is available online at: www.helpabusedwomen.org.

Speak-Out

Speaking Up reader Sara Chesbrough, Volunteer Program Coordinator at the Clarina Howard Nichols Center in Morrisville, Vermont, reports that her program organizes an annual speak-out and vigil in the town's center. Several prominent community members and a domestic violence survivor are invited to speak about the need to end violence in the community. Signs are posted around the town's center, explaining what the vigil is about and encouraging people to participate; a large banner is also hung across the main intersection in town to publicize the event.

The program consists of speeches, group sharing, and a candle lighting ceremony and moment of silence to remember and honor those lives touched by violence. Information packets are distributed and refreshments are served. This year, a local state college is helping to organize a domestic violence video screening and student volunteers will make signs for the speak-out. They plan to have an after-vigil concert at a local coffee shop.

"We share responsibility by creating an committee and meet once a month," writes Chesbrough. "Lots of calls need to be made early, especially to potential speakers at the vigil. The event takes us ten to 15 hour. For more information, contact Sara Chesbrough via email: saraphim4@yahoo.com or via phone: 802/888-2584.

Get Involved Day

Activist Karen Jeffreys of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence is organizing a "Get Involved" Day on Saturday, October 2, when local programs throughout the state recruit individual community volunteers and businesses to distribute *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* materials. Most agencies are organizing a meeting at a central place in the community to give volunteers refreshments, provide music and speeches. Afterward, the volunteers fan out to distribute the information. Many will distribute posters, palm cards, brochures, merchandise, and more. For more information, contact Karen Jeffreys via email: ritarheel@ricadv.org or via phone: 401/467-9940.

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH ACTIVITIES

The following list includes some of the many national *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* activities planned for this October. Battered women's advocates are encouraged to contact the sponsoring organizations to find out more about each event and explore how local communities can get involved. Advocates often can join national events, linking their local activities to national campaigns. Please note that this list is not comprehensive; it is a sample of the national events that will take place in October.

► **October 7** – Marshalls will sponsor the eleventh annual *Shop Til It Stops Day*. Americans can help end abuse simply by shopping at a Marshalls store. This will be the eleventh year that Marshalls donates a percentage of the day's sales from all its stores to efforts to prevent

domestic violence. This year, proceeds will go to the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) to support efforts to prevent violence against women and raise awareness about the harmful affects of abuse.

► **October 13** – Organized by the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence, a project of the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF), *Health Cares About Domestic Violence Day* encourages health care providers to "Screen to Prevent Abuse." To help raise awareness of domestic violence as a health care issue, hospitals, health associations and insurance companies around the country have planned events and activities. For more information visit the FVPPF's web site, www.endabuse.org, or contact the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence toll-free at 1-888-Rx-Abuse. *Health Cares About Domestic Violence Day* materials and resources also are available on the FVPPF's web site, www.endabuse.org.

► **October 14** – Liz Claiborne & Marie Claire present "It's Time to Talk" Day. Americans nationwide will be urged to talk in classrooms, offices, homes and coffeehouses about the fact that one in three women will be abused in her lifetime. Encourage these conversations by distributing educational materials in offices, working with local government to hold a Town Hall Meeting, or suggesting that policy makers declare a "Moment of Talk." For more information please email itstimetotalk@liz.com.

► **October 17 through October 23** – Organized by the YWCA of the USA, the *YWCA Week Without Violence*

encourages domestic violence awareness and violence prevention activities including tree plantings, candlelight vigils and community forums. Each day of the public education campaign addresses a different form of violence: Monday, October 18 is “Protecting Our Children,” and Wednesday, October 20 is “Confronting Violence Against Women.” For more information visit the YWCA’s web site, www.ywca.org. A *Week without Violence* organizer’s kit and other resources and tools also are available online.

Several other *DVAM* events are in development, and future issues of *Speaking Up* will update this list.

Speaking Up is designed to assist the grassroots activists who are working to prevent and reduce domestic violence, and to serve as an information source for other experts. Contact *Speaking Up* editor Ridgely Benjamin with story ideas or information via email: speakingup@prsolutionsdc.com, via phone: 202/371-1999 or via fax: 202/371-9142.

DO YOU HAVE EMAIL?

Distributing *Speaking Up* by email saves time and money, and allows the newsletter to reach more people. If you are not already receiving *Speaking Up* by email and have an email address, please contact *Speaking Up* editor Ridgely Benjamin at: speakingup@prsolutionsdc.com. Please be sure to include your organization’s name, address, phone number and fax number.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

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OUTREACH

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

In October and all year round, advocates can work with elected officials – city council members, judges, sheriffs, mayors, state legislators, governors and Members of Congress – to keep them informed about issues and alert them to the work that programs do in the community. *Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)*, in particular, offers advocates and elected officials a unique opportunity to work together to raise public awareness about violence against women.

Elected officials can help stop domestic violence through supportive legislation and generous appropriations. Lawmakers set public policies and funding priorities that affect domestic violence and sexual assault services, research and prevention programs. Across the country, there are federal, state and local laws designed to protect victims of violence, and many battered women's service and prevention organizations depend on funding from governments for survival.

Most advocates agree that there is much more that local, state and national elected officials can do. It is important that advocates work with their elected officials to continue improving their response. Advocates should let their local, state and national representatives know what issues are vital to victims of domestic violence, as well as to their programs. The more advocates stay in contact with their representatives, the more likely it is that those representatives will take the issue seriously and support measures to fund victim services, prevention and research.

Working with Candidates

Candidates for office – from president to city council – are campaigning every day. They are eager to meet voters and talk about issues. This provides an excellent chance for advocates to ask about domestic violence and sexual assault at town hall meetings and other public forums.

Consider taking some or all of the following steps to raise the issue of violence against women.

- Attend town meetings or candidate forums, and ask about domestic violence. Questions should be tailored to reflect the situations and laws in your state or city. Examples include:
 - What specifically will you do during your first year in office to stop domestic violence and help victims?
 - Right now, domestic violence shelters and programs in [your city or county] have to turn away some [number] women and children per year due to tight budgets and lack of space. What will you do to ensure that services are available for all victims who need them?
 - Will you support legislation to prevent health insurers from treating domestic violence as a pre-existing condition?

- Will you support school-based education programs that teach children that violence against women is wrong, and encourage school board members to adopt such programs?
 - What will you do to help battered women who are trying to make the transition from welfare to work?
 - Will you support increased collaboration between child welfare agencies and battered women's programs, to ensure that children growing up in violent homes receive the support that they need?
 - [For congressional and presidential candidates only] Will you support additional funding for prevention when the Violence Against Women Act is reauthorized next year?
- Create visuals (posters, signs, stickers) that say, "[Your town] wants to stop domestic violence." Have supporters go to public events and wear the stickers and display the signs.
- Write letters-to-the-editor alerting readers to the unmet need for services in your community, and urging candidates or potential nominees to address the issue.
- Pose questions to candidates through their web sites, and hold onto any answers you receive. They may be useful down the road if you want to hold an official accountable.

It is important to note that there are strict rules that govern the election-related activities of nonprofit organizations. For example, many domestic violence prevention organizations are not registered as political action committees and are not allowed to endorse specific candidates. Other actions are restricted as well. Advocates should consult with their organizations' attorneys for details about what types of activities are allowed by law.

SAMPLE MEDIA MATERIALS

The following are sample fill-in-the-blanks media materials to help advocates with their media outreach for *Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)*. Some materials have been adapted from the 2001 publication, *Domestic Violence Awareness: Tips, Tactics & Resources*, developed by the Domestic Violence Awareness Project in collaboration with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and others were developed by *Speaking Up* editors. Feel free to adapt these materials to suit your program's needs, and distribute them to journalists in your market. If you need help in identifying journalists in your market who cover domestic violence, email speakingup@prsolutionsdc.com and the editors will provide a list.

SAMPLE CALENDAR ANNOUNCEMENT

September 27, 2004

Contact: [Name]
[Area Code/Phone]

First Annual Stop Domestic Violence Luncheon will be held **Monday, October 18, 11:30 AM – 2 PM, at the Rosa Parks Building (1250 Main Street, Anytown)**. The *Luncheon* will raise awareness about domestic violence in the African American community, focusing on violence prevention and steps that concerned citizens can take to help end abuse in their neighborhoods. The *Luncheon* is sponsored in part by the Anytown Housing Authority Domestic Violence Crisis Intervention Unit and [your agency]. It is one of dozens of events scheduled around the city and across the country to mark *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, this October.

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SAMPLE STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF DR. ROSA SANTIAGO,
Director, Latina Women's Center
October 18, 2004

CONTACT: [Name]
[Area Code/Phone]

“Today we join women – and men – all across the country to support victims of violence and to send the message that domestic violence is unacceptable in our community and in every community.

Domestic violence touches every one of us. It fills emergency rooms and morgues. It keeps employees from being able to work. It makes children fearful and angry. It contributes to crime on our streets. It destroys homes and families.

Domestic violence is everybody's business, and we must all support efforts to end abuse. Only by making a real commitment to stop domestic violence can we end this devastating problem.

Each of us must do all that we can to stop domestic violence. I encourage everyone here to sign the pledge cards we are circulating, and to take action to stop domestic violence whenever and wherever they can.”

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SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA ADVISORY
October 19, 2004

Contact: [Name]
[Area Code/Phone]

ANYTOWN'S LATINO COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Men's March and Community-Wide Celebration of Unity Raise Awareness about Abuse

October is *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* and the Latino community will help spread the message that domestic violence is everybody's business at *Calling All Men: March to End Domestic Violence* on

**Saturday, October 23 at Noon
1399 McAllister Avenue (*March starting point*)**

The *March*, co-sponsored by the [your agency], will raise awareness about domestic violence and its prevention in Anytown's Latino community. Men will march from McAllister Avenue to Fillmore Mini Park, where there will be information booths on domestic violence, free food and music. Women and children are invited to join the men as they march to promote peace in their homes, community, city, country and world.

**Following the *March*, there will be a *Celebration of Unity in the Community* at
5 PM at the Latino Arts and Culture Complex (762 Fulton St.)**

The *Celebration* will feature local artists [list their names] and special guest [X Children's Choir]. The evening's activities and performances will raise domestic violence awareness, encourage people to take action against abuse and celebrate peace in the city and around the globe. The *Celebration* is a joint venture sponsored by [co-sponsors].

[Your agency's one-sentence boilerplate description, for instance: The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) works to end domestic violence and help women and children whose lives are devastated by abuse, because every person has the right to live free of violence.]

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE
October 25, 2004

Contact: [Name]
[Area Code/Phone]

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN UNITED AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE JOINS CITY-WIDE “STAND AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE”

ANYTOWN - Five hundred women and their families joined City Council member Laura Johnson and other officials at a rally at City Hall today to encourage residents to help stop domestic violence. The theme of the rally was, *Domestic Violence, It Is Your Business! Take A Stand Against Abuse.*

Jane Smith, Executive Director of African American Women United Against Domestic Violence, addressed the crowd. “Today we join Americans across the country to support victims of domestic violence and let batterers know that there is no excuse for abuse,” said Dr. Smith. “Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions in our community. The violence knows no boundaries. It exists in all neighborhoods, in all cities and in all countries. It has no racial barriers, no economic barriers, and no social barriers. Only if men and women come together and send the message that family violence is unacceptable can we finally put a stop to the violence that is causing so much harm to our communities.”

Battered women’s advocates from across the city circulated pledge cards for people at the rally to sign. It reads: “I pledge to take a stand against domestic violence. I recognize that domestic violence threatens the lives of women and children and the health of entire communities. I recognize that domestic violence is everyone’s business and we must all take a stand to prevent abuse. I promise to get involved in the effort to reduce domestic violence in my neighborhood, my city, my country and my world.”

Nationally, nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, according to a 1998 Commonwealth Fund survey. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. [Add statistics about the prevalence of domestic violence in your community].

“We all have a responsibility to take a stand to prevent domestic violence whenever and wherever we can,” said Council Member Johnson. “Domestic violence is everyone’s business. In some way, it affects all of us and we must all make a real commitment to stop it.”

The Stand Against Domestic Violence rally is one of hundreds of events taking place around the country in October, *Domestic Violence Awareness Month.*

FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS EDITORIAL MEMORANDUM

[Date]

TO: Editorial Page Editor
FROM: [Your Name, Organization Name]
RE: *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*

The statistics are staggering. Every [day/week/year] in our community [include local statistic]. This October, domestic violence experts and service providers in [town/city] and across our state are coming together to help end abuse. As you may know, October is *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, a time when battered women's advocates across the nation focus attention on the epidemic of domestic violence, and encourage everyone to become part of the solution.

Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions in this country and in our community. Nationally, nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, according to a 1998 Commonwealth Fund survey. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. And here in [town/city], [fill in local data on women seeking help at shelters, calling hotlines, etc.].

This month, [Organization Name] will: [Include information about the activities your organization has planned for October. Be sure to include the date of each event].

But these events are not enough. Domestic violence is everyone's business. It affects all of us - every family, every workplace, every community. And each one of us has a role to play in stopping domestic violence. Action can be as simple as contributing money or clothing to a local battered women's shelter, volunteering time to a program that aids victims of abuse, talking to a child about relationship violence, offering support to a battered woman, or posting awareness materials in public places.

Individuals who want to help or who would like to participate in *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* activities can call [organization's phone] for more information.

During *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, I hope you will encourage your readers to join efforts to reduce domestic violence in our community. Domestic violence is everyone's business. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at [your phone] on weekdays from [9 AM to 6 PM.] Thank you for your consideration.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK PITCH LETTER

[September 22, 2004]

[Journalist's Name]

[Outlet]

[Mailing Address]

Dear [Journalist's Name]:

The statistics are staggering. Every [day/week/year] in our community [provide local statistic]. As you may know, October is *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, a time when battered women's advocates around the nation draw attention to domestic violence and its devastating consequences. I am writing to suggest that, during *Awareness Month*, you [interview/write a story about/write a column about] [name and title of your organization's director], who is one of the true heroes of our movement.

You may know that [Include information on the person's history and work at the organization. EG: Dr. Smith has been running the Center for ten years. During that time, the shelter has housed more than 1,200 victims of domestic violence and their children, and provided referrals and support to countless others. She works directly with many of our clients, keeping them safe, providing counseling, aiding them as they navigate complex social service systems, and helping them take legal action, find jobs and rebuild their lives].

The [shelter/organization] [include a brief description of the services your organization provides]. To mark *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* [provide info on the events your organization has planned for October. Include the date for each]. [Name of organization's director] will speak at both events.

Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions in our country. Nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, according to a 1998 Commonwealth Fund survey. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in this country every day. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

Domestic violence is tearing apart families and communities across the country and here in [city/town]. [Name of organization's director] is working to end this devastating problem. I hope you will consider [a profile of/an interview with] [organization's director]. I will call you in a few days to follow up. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at [your phone number]. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]