

Founder & Executive Director of the American Domestic Violence Crisis Line to Appear on the Today Show

PORTLAND, Or. (May 8, 2007) – In the eyes of hundreds of American women and children living overseas who have escaped abusive relationships, there has never been any question that the American Domestic Violence Crisis Line is a life saving resource. The relatively little known international toll free domestic violence hotline is having a chance at some national exposure on Friday, May 11th when Founder & Executive Director, Paula Lucas, is scheduled to be on the Today Show in New York.

Lucas' Story

For the majority of her married life, Lucas was a scared American mother living overseas trying to protect herself and her children from her abusive husband. With no resources available or people she could confide in to help bring her family to safety, Lucas didn't know where to turn, especially after she found out the American Embassy could not intervene. When Lucas and her children were finally able to secretly escape back to the U.S., she discovered her fight was not over. Complicated jurisdictional issues for child custody and divorce meant another year and a half in the courts, and tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees, to keep her American children in their own country. She could not believe what she had to endure to keep her children safe. So, still living in a domestic violence shelter 6 months after arriving home, Lucas took matters into her own hands and founded the American Domestic Violence Crisis Line.

Today, the crisis line acts as a lifeline for American victims of domestic violence living overseas. The line is accessible toll free from 175 countries around the world and serves the civilian and military populations estimated at 6 to 7 million Americans. In 2006 the program received 1,281 crisis calls and emails and helped 258 families in 47 countries offering including domestic violence advocacy, intervention, case management, safety planning, information and referral. The organization also offers danger to safety

transportation back to the USA, payment of legal retainers so battered mothers can file for custody of their children, professional counseling and transitional housing. First quarter statistics for 2007 reflect a 48% increase in crisis calls & emails over the first quarter in 2006. Crisis calls and emails for April 2007 were triple that of April 2006.

“I know I’ve been given a second chance – I am one of the lucky ones.” Lucas says. “We are so excited to finally get some national exposure for the program. We serve a population of 4.2 million American civilians and military personnel overseas. Some population estimates are 6 to 7 million. Most folks think that all an abused American woman has to do is go to the American embassy and they will get her and her children back home to the USA. That is a big misconception. It is far more complicated, and even more obstacles exist back home in the USA even if she does manage to escape and flee abuse trans-nationally.”

The American Domestic Violence Crisis Line, 866-USWOMEN, is accessible internationally toll free by contacting an AT&T operator in the country the caller is located in and asking to be connected. Nationally the line is available toll free to the families in the USA who have loved ones being abused overseas. It currently operates 24/5, from Monday mornings at 9am PST continuously through Saturday mornings at 9am PST.