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YOUNG DC MEN TAKE ACTION DURING SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

Men Can Stop Rape's Men of Strength Club Members Serve as Positive Role Models

WASHINGTON, DC – Every April since the 1980s, women and girls across the nation have been raising awareness of sexual violence as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). These actions by women and girls beg the question, what are men doing? This April Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) and the young men of Washington, DC have an answer.

During all of April the young men in MCSR's Men of Strength (MOST) Club will implement a city-wide project called "30 Days of Strength." As part of SAAM members of the MOST Club, an internationally-renowned youth program, will encourage fellow students to get involved in changing common attitudes and actions connected to sexual and dating violence. As a capstone to the month, Men Can Stop Rape will host its 9th Annual Men of Strength Awards on April 29th at the National Press Club. Three outstanding Men of Strength Club members and Chris "Kazi" Rolle, star of the film documentary The Hip Hop Project, will be honored for positively redefining what it means to be a man and for creating stronger, healthier communities free from violence against women.

Men Can Stop Rape and D.C. United have teamed up for one of the main features of "30 Days" – the Strong Words Essay Contest. The contest asks students at 19 DC high schools to write an essay on the question, "How can soccer be used as a tool for promoting gender equity and social justice?" All entries have the chance to win a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond donated by D.C. United and United for D.C.

30 Days will provide other opportunities for teens to become involved in SAAM. Action sheets and informational handouts will be distributed throughout schools. MOST Club members will hang MCSR posters in school hallways and put 30 Days messages on school computer screensavers. Meetings open to the student body will include such topics as "How High School Students Can Be Role Models for Younger Students." For the first time, Club members will initiate MOST TV, a half hour program on DCTV featuring MOST Club members and DC Youth addressing youth-centered concerns. Neil Irvin, National Director of the Men of Strength Club, says that active, hands-on involvement by MOST Club members "will send a message to the young men of DC that they can play a positive role in preventing sexual assault."

In addition to 30 Days, every April Men Can Stop Rape honors exceptional Men of Strength Club members at its Men of Strength Awards. Members Odinga Johnson, William Harris, and D'Von Moore will each receive a \$1,000 educational grant for their commitment to preventing gender violence and promoting gender equity in the areas of academics, activism, and athletics. "These three young men represent a healthy masculinity that benefits us all," says Steve Glaude, Men Can Stop Rape's Executive Director.

The Lemmon-Stillerman Man of Strength Award, Men Can Stop Rape's national award previously presented to the likes of Congressman John Conyers, Jr. and former NFL Defensive Lineman Joe Ehrmann, will be awarded to Chris "Kazi" Rolle, founder of The Hip Hop Project, a youth development program he created under New York City's ArtStart. Kazi's work with talented inner city youth was recently chronicled in The Hip Hop Project, a 2007 documentary film produced by Bruce Willis and Queen Latifah.

WKYS on-air personality and youth advocate EZ Street will host this awards ceremony, dinner, and silent auction, intended to raise funds to expand MOST Club's reach to male youth in middle and high schools in DC and across the country. The Awards is sponsored by The Summit Fund of Washington, The Weissberg Foundation, Eileen Fisher, Neo Soul, D.C. United and United for D.C., Port Smith Creations, and The Washington Post.

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Men Can Stop Rape mobilizes men to use their strength for creating cultures free from violence, especially men's violence against women. Go to our website at www.mencanstoprape.org.