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Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Statewide Advocacy Awards Announced

Topeka, KS, 2/14/2013 – A statewide domestic and sexual violence advocacy organization honored individuals and agencies with statewide awards on February 13. The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence announced each award at its tenth annual Safe Homes, Safe Streets reception in Topeka. Award winners included:

- State-Level Elected Official of the Year – late Rep. Bob Bethell from Alden
Through his works of service, Bob Bethell demonstrated a strong and deep care for people, particularly the vulnerable citizens of Kansas. He was a role model for all of us – focusing on what matters and caring for those who need it most. He reached out to victims of domestic and sexual violence incarcerated at the Topeka Correctional Facility, bringing their stories to legislators. Representative Bethell died last year on his way home from the legislative session. He is missed by all of us. Here tonight to accept this award is Laura Patzner, director of the Family Crisis Center, Inc. in Great Bend.
- Juliene Maska Advocate of the Year award - Laura Brown, from the Family Crisis Center, Inc., in Great Bend
For 15 years, Laura has worked in communities with little or no additional resources requiring her to address barriers creatively, engaging community partners to ensure safety and security for survivors and their families. She works tirelessly, leaving before the sun comes up to reach communities in time for court cases, law enforcement interviews, school appointments and to provide supportive services, assist with protection orders and advocate with community partners on behalf of survivors arriving home long after the sun sets.
- State-Level Ally of the Year – Lori Haskett, director of Injury and Disability Prevention Programs for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Lori oversees KDHE's Sexual Violence Prevention and Education program, collaborating with sexual and domestic violence advocacy programs and partnering with sixteen schools across Kansas to support implementation of the bullying prevention curriculum from the Committee for Children entitled "Steps to Respect."

Statewide DV/SA Awards

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- Project of the Year - Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center's Promotora Project
Promotoras, or health promoters, focus on violence against women and girls as a major health concern and reach out to the Latino and immigrant communities that often struggle to get services for sexual and domestic violence to help ensure that even the most vulnerable survivors know they have somewhere to turn for help.
- Volunteer of the Year - Madeline Giesler, from the Willow Domestic Violence Center in Lawrence
Advocacy programs would not survive without the vital contribution of tireless volunteers. Madeline epitomizes the ideal volunteer advocate, frequently going above and beyond the call of duty to provide ongoing support and assistance to her fellow advocates and to the survivors the Willow serves.
- Community-Based Ally of the Year - Sister Carol Ann Petersen, Director of the Keeler Women's Center in Kansas City, Kansas
Sr. Peterson, among other things, has worked with the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA) to coordinate services for victims of sexual assault. Without a doubt, she embodies the mission of Keeler Women's Center of empowering women in the urban core of Kansas City through education, advocacy, personal, and spiritual development.

"Without the vision and energy of all of these award winners, our work would not be as rich or as strong," says Joyce Grover, executive director of KCSDV. "KCSDV thanks all of these award winners (and their families) for their support for victims."

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Founded in 1982, the purpose of KCSDV is the prevention and elimination of sexual and domestic violence through a statewide network of programs providing support and safety for all victims of sexual and domestic violence and stalking, with primary focus on women and their children; direct services; public awareness and education; advocacy for victims; comprehensive prevention; and, social change efforts. Learn more at www.kcsdv.org.