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## **Overland Park woman receives statewide Advocate of the Year honor**

**TOPEKA, KAN., FEBRUARY 21, 2011** — A dedicated advocate working on behalf of victims and survivors of domestic violence has been recognized by a statewide advocacy organization. Katie McClafin Van Wagner of Overland Park received the Juliene Maska Advocate of the Year Award from the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) during its 8<sup>th</sup> annual Safe Homes, Safe Streets reception in Topeka on February 9.

“We honor Katie for her above-and-beyond commitment on behalf of victims of domestic violence,” said Joyce Grover, executive director of KCSDV. “The Advocate of the Year award is given in recognition of efforts that often go unrecognized, but are transformative and in many cases are life-saving.”

Katie McClafin Van Wagner worked for the past five years as the staff attorney at SAFEHOME in Overland Park. As the staff attorney, Katie provided services for a variety of family law matters, including divorce, child custody and visitation, paternity, and name change, and she represented survivors petitioning for Protection from Abuse and Protection from Stalking Orders.

“Katie skillfully navigated the legal system on behalf of survivors, engaging survivors in the decision-making process, and respecting their decisions on how to move their case forward,” said Sharon Katz, executive director of SAFEHOME. “Katie lives her passion for justice even today. In addition to her previous work at SAFEHOME, Katie dedicated countless hours to improving victim advocacy within the legal profession.”

For over 30 years, SAFEHOME has been saving lives. Since its incorporation as a not-for-profit agency in 1980, SAFEHOME has grown from a network of “safe homes” in the community to a 45-bed shelter and comprehensive service provider for victims of domestic violence. Services include: safe shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, counseling, child care, school and community education programs, Johnson County District Court and hospital advocacy, and civil legal assistance. All services are free and confidential. In 2010, SAFEHOME assisted over 6,400 survivors of domestic violence.

Since 1995 KCSDV has been recognizing outstanding advocates and allies who are working to enhance victim safety, to increase perpetrator accountability, and to prevent and eliminate sexual and domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in Kansas. In addition to the Advocate of the Year award, 34 advocates and volunteers from SAFEHOME were honored for five, 10 and 15 years of service working in the movement to end violence against women in Kansas.

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