



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 2, 2011

CONTACT:
Gena Boyle
804.874.4734

gboyle@vsdvalliance.org

ACTION ALLIANCE TO CELEBRATE 30 YEARS AT ANNUAL GALA; HONOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS INSTRUMENTAL TO THE DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE MOVEMENT IN VIRGINIA

Richmond, VA – In honor of their 30th anniversary, the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance will honor thirty individuals and groups who have made significant contributions in the movement to end sexual and domestic violence tomorrow evening at the annual Act, Honor, Hope gala.

Kristi VanAudenhove, Co-Director of the Action Alliance and long-time advocate for sexual and domestic violence victims in Virginia, offered the following comments on the list of honorees:

“Thirty years ago, victims of sexual and domestic violence in Virginia had few options for finding safety and resources. Because of the work of the individuals and groups being honored this year, as well as countless others; victims now have choices in addressing violence being perpetrated against them. In addition to criminal and civil legal options, we have hotlines and 57 accredited programs across the state to provide advocacy and crisis and safety services. Most importantly, this movement is becoming increasingly focused on the prevention of sexual and domestic violence by educating children, youth and our communities that all relationships should be respectful, healthy and safe. “

The 30th Anniversary honorees range from sexual and domestic violence program directors to law enforcement officers, to legislators. The gala will take place at 6:00pm at the Renaissance Center in Richmond. Tickets and information can be obtained online at www.vsdvalliance.org.

30 Voices for 30 Years: Celebrating the People Who Influence Our Work

1. Greg Beitzel- Staunton, VA

Sergeant Greg Beitzel has made a difference in the lives of domestic violence survivors at the local, state, national and international level for well over twenty years. With more than 25 years of law enforcement experience before his retirement, Greg is knowledgeable about domestic violence and able to communicate to other officers the need for compassion for victims and firmness with perpetrators. He is a committed advocate for domestic violence victims and their children, a highly skilled trainer, and a knowledgeable and intuitive policy maker. Sergeant Beitzel is also a founding father of Safe Harbor, the first domestic violence shelter in Henrico County.

2. The Honorable Rob Bell- Charlottesville, VA

Delegate Bell has always been open and willing to listen to the voices of survivors when making policy decisions. He has been a champion for important legislative issues that include: marital rape, mandates requiring law enforcement to have written policies when responding to sexual assault cases, and for Commonwealth Attorney's to establish coordinated community response teams. Most recently, Delegate Bell was instrumental in assisting advocates from all over the state in passing legislation that expanded access to protective orders for victims of stalking, sexual assault and dating violence.

3. Pat Brown- Radford, VA

Pat has dedicated the past 25 years to service in the sexual and domestic violence movement, providing extensive leadership as president of both Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault (VAASA) and Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV), mentoring her staff to take on leadership roles at the statewide level and building one of the strongest programs in the state. Pat is always willing to share her extensive knowledge of management, fund development, legislative advocacy, and community development with anyone who knocks on her door.

4. Judy Castele- Lexington, VA

Judy has been a strong ally in coalition work serving as interim Director of VASSA during a period of transition, serving multiple terms on the Action Alliance governing body including several leadership roles, and serving on numerous committees for the statewide coalition; most recently playing a key role in public policy. Judy is considered by many to be a strong mentor and friend; supporting, nurturing and training many advocates throughout the state, sharing her strong leadership and experience as Director of Project Horizon- a leading sexual and domestic violence program in the state.

5. Steve Clementi- Richmond, VA

Steve has developed a true partnership with the Action Alliance with his strong support of prevention work in Virginia through the Verizon Foundation. Always a strong and positive advocate for the sexual and domestic violence movement, Clementi has served on the Red

Flag campaign advisory committee--working alongside campus professionals and students to develop the campaign and bringing national attention to domestic violence prevention on college campuses. In addition, Clementi has helped support dozens of local sexual and domestic violence programs with his work at the Verizon Foundation. Steve is a positive voice for supporting anti-violence work, and can always be counted on to help find a way to get any project accomplished.

6. Gay Cutchin- Petersburg, VA

Gay was instrumental in the development of effective sexual and domestic violence services at Virginia Commonwealth University and a campus coalition of programs and individuals providing services on private and public campuses across the state. Gay has also served as a coalition board member and president of local sexual and domestic violence agencies in communities where she lives and works. She is a mentor and leader to many young and emerging advocates in the field.

7. Kathleen Demro- Henrico, VA

Kathleen has served the sexual and domestic violence field at the state and local level. Coupling her extensive training and experience in the sexual and domestic violence field with that of her work in the non-profit world, she has become an expert on trauma and its impact on both survivors and advocates, non-profit board development and non-profit management. Kathleen is a seasoned trainer, fearless advocate, and tireless leader providing support to the Action Alliance in addition to any local program that calls on her for assistance. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Safe Harbor in Henrico County.

8. Deb Downing- Gum Spring, VA

Deb has mentored hundreds of advocates, students, and law enforcement officers across Virginia. She took her experience as the director of a local domestic violence program and built a career at the state level, working at the Department of Criminal Justice Services training law enforcement, creating policy and helping to bring funding and attention to local sexual and domestic violence services. Deb has provided countless leadership and volunteer hours to the statewide coalition supporting many aspects of the work. What defines Deb is the time and attention she has taken to mentor many local leaders throughout Virginia encouraging them to take risks and be heard.

9. Kassandra Edwards- Prince George, VA

Kay has been a steadfast leader in the sexual and domestic violence movement. She has used her position at the Department of Criminal Justice Services to provide excellent training and technical assistance throughout Virginia. She has played a strong role in the Women of Color Caucus and has served on numerous statewide task forces and boards working on sexual and domestic violence issues. Kay is a pragmatist, maintaining a calm demeanor and building consensus, even around the most difficult issues. While Kay is newer to the work she is an advocate at heart, and carries her previous experience as a victim witness advocate into making positive lasting change for survivors at the statewide level.

10. Regina Pack Eller- Wytheville, VA

Regina has been a statewide advocate in the sexual and domestic violence movement for over 24 years. She has represented her local program enthusiastically, spending countless hours making long drives to ensure that the voices of survivors and advocates in Southwest Virginia were heard. She provided leadership to VASSA serving as board president; she has served on the Alliance's accreditation committee and participated in the annual retreat of the coalitions for decades. She has mentored many staff from Southwest Virginia encouraging them to become active in statewide work, and has provided countless hours of direct service to survivors as she helped build her local program. She is an inspiring, passionate advocate with staying power, always making sure the voices of survivors are heard from all parts of the state

11. Candace Feathers- Virginia Beach, VA

Candace provided leadership as Executive Director of VADV in the 1980's providing technical support to local programs, legislative advocacy and organization to a growing coalition. Taking this experience, she went to Hampton Roads and provided significant technical assistance and program development to local domestic violence and child abuse programs. She was a founding mother of statewide work and laid the groundwork for many of the early organizational and legislative successes in Virginia.

12. Marcella Fierro, M.D.- Richmond, VA

Dr. Fierro, M.D. was Chief Medical Examiner in VA from 1994-2007. She used her time with the Virginia Commission on Family Violence Prevention project to share the data collected from her office on intimate partner homicide. An especially innovative part of the data analysis included information on deaths that were intimate partner associated (those caught in the crossfire of domestic violence). All of the data collected has assisted in shaping legislation across the state, in addition to improving services in local programs by helping advocates to better understand lethal risk factors for the families they serve. Dr. Fierro believed that by taking the tragedies that came through her morgue, she had a chance to advocate for those who could no longer advocate for themselves-- bringing about good from their pain and suffering.

13. Janett Forte- Doswell, VA

Janett has spent most of her professional career serving the sexual and domestic violence community in a variety of ways. She had a dramatic impact on developing community responses as the Coordinator for the Chesterfield Sexual and Domestic Violence Resource Center, helping to establish a local government commitment to coordinated services in this community, and establishing one of the first domestic violence coordinating councils. During this tenure Janett played a leadership role with VADV, serving as president. Janett is once again serving on the coalition governing body and has taken her work to an international level, making many trips to Central America helping to fundraise and build services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence in these underserved parts of the world. She truly makes this issue a global one with her passion and dedication.

14. Patricia Foster- Martinsville, VA

Patricia has been a strong advocate in the violence against women field. Bravely carrying the torch of the sexual and domestic violence movement into victim services, Patricia has used her previous experience as a victim witness advocate to help individuals in the criminal justice system understand specific issues of survivors. Patricia has also provided significant leadership to the Women of Color Caucus, helping them give voice to anti-racism work in Virginia and improving services for Women of Color exposed to sexual and domestic violence. Patricia uses her calm, reassuring personality and in depth knowledge of sexual and domestic violence to give the violence against women movement a strong voice in the criminal justice system.

15. Pat Groot- Palmyra, VA

Pat Groot was the founding director of Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault (VAASA) providing statewide leadership at a time when the sexual violence movement had just begun in Virginia. She became active in lobbying and new policy initiatives serving on numerous statewide task forces and commissions as she worked to improve Virginia's laws related to rape and sexual assault. Pat also worked on the national level helping to found the National Alliance to End Sexual Assault. Perhaps what was most significant about Pat's leadership was her ability to do so much with so little. She mentored advocates all over the state and helped bring a strong and passionate voice to the issue of sexual violence in Virginia when most programs had little or no funding, working primarily as volunteer based organizations.

16. Ted Heck- Richmond, VA

Ted began to be interested in intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ community upon writing a thesis about hate crimes against lesbians and gay men. After moving to Virginia and beginning work with the Department of Health on HIV prevention, Ted got involved with the Action Alliance. He helped found the queer caucus and served on the governing body of the Action Alliance. Ted has always used his gentle nature and Quaker roots to bring about thoughtful change with any group he works for. Ted has continued his statewide work as a founding board member of the Virginia Anti-Violence Project (a non-profit addressing violence in the LGBTQ community). He has also served as a board member for Equality Virginia and started a support group for Female-to-Male transgendered persons. Ted is a committed advocate to the anti-violence movement making sure the needs and voices of the LGBTQ community are heard.

17. The Honorable Janet Howell- Reston, VA

Senator Howell has been a long-time advocate and champion of legislation to support the rights of victims of sexual and domestic violence in Virginia. As chair of the Commission on Family Violence, Senator Howell promoted numerous legislative proposals to assist survivors of violence and their families. Included in her impressive legislative work are the domestic violence pro-arrest laws, and tougher laws for child sexual abuse and stalking. She has contributed significantly to Virginia's domestic violence prevention movement.

18. Patricia Jones-Turner- Chesterfield, VA

Patricia has dedicated her life to work in the sexual and domestic violence movement, giving a powerful voice to the unique experiences of survivors of color. She has combined her work in the ministry with her anti-violence work starting her own non-profit LifeLine Ministries, Inc. that provides unique support and services to survivors of violence. Patricia has contributed on the statewide level writing curriculum on domestic violence for both Virginia Commonwealth University and the Virginia Department of Social Services. She assisted VADV in helping to create the Women of Color Caucus, which is still in existence today, linking issues of racism with violence against women. In her home community of Chesterfield County, Patricia has assisted with facilitating Chesterfield's fatality review team and contributed this work to the Virginia fatality review team. She has published not only in the field of fatality review, but also in creating a response to the needs of Latino women in immigrant communities. Patricia is a groundbreaking, pathfinder who has worked for decades on bringing the voices of survivors and women of color into the violence against women movement.

19. Claire Kaplan- Charlottesville, VA

Claire brought her experiences from working on sexual assault in Los Angeles to the University of Virginia's Women's Resource Center. She immediately began providing leadership to VASSA, the state sexual assault coalition, and later to the Action Alliance, representing the voices of college campuses across Virginia. She helped establish the Virginia Coalition on Campus Sexual Assault, and has provided countless trainings at the state and national level. Claire has also provided a voice for the underserved populations in the movement. She has provided training and published articles related to work with many traditionally underserved populations, including: those who are deaf, lesbians, immigrants, African Americans, Latinas, older women and youth. Claire has also done community organizing and lecturing on sexual and domestic violence in El Salvador. She truly is an international advocate for the movement.

20. Cartie Lominack- Charlottesville, VA

Cartie has served with absolute dedication to statewide work in the domestic violence movement for over 20 years. From the beginning of her professional career as Executive Director of the Shelter for Help in Emergency in Charlottesville, Cartie became involved with VADV, the domestic violence coalition. She served on the board of directors for many years and was president for 4 years where she assisted the coalition in doubling their staff size, adding a statewide hotline, and stabilizing their financial operations. Serving on the Commission on Family Violence Prevention, Cartie helped bring about groundbreaking legislation in the domestic violence movement. She has inspired others to live by their work, encouraging advocates to think about how their individual actions and relationships can contribute to violence in our culture. Cartie has mentored and encouraged her staff and community to get involved in the movement, while building a leading domestic violence program in Virginia.

21. Ruth Micklem- Whitestone, VA

Ruth began her interest in sexual and domestic violence after completing an internship at a homeless shelter in Petersburg, recognizing that many of the residents were victims of sexual and domestic violence. This began a long and illustrious career first in several local programs before coming to Virginians Against Domestic Violence as a Co-Director in 1990. At the statewide level, Ruth provided fearless, passionate leadership and advocacy for nearly 20 years. Her leadership led to the opening of the statewide hotline, the formation of the Training Institute, and the creation of a statewide data system that continues to be the state of the art in collecting sexual and domestic violence services data, and numerous partnerships and collaborations that have moved policy and practice forward in positive ways. A strong believer in the benefits of working together to create change, Ruth realized a long-held dream to bring the sexual assault and domestic violence coalitions together in 2004 and provided leadership for five years to the newly formed Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. Currently, Ruth has returned to her local community providing advocacy and policy work on the Northern Neck.

22. Dilcia Margott Molina Sanchez - Fredericksburg, VA

Dilcia is the founder of Madre Tierra (mother earth), an organization that works to assist Latina women dealing with domestic violence and other issues. A lesbian and Honduran mother, she has lived in the United States under political asylum since 2002, and is an information specialist for other LGBT Latina/o asylum seekers. At the Clinica del Pueblo, a Latino health clinic in Washington D.C., Dilcia organizes support groups for people living with HIV, and is conducting a study on immigrant Latinos who are involved in commercial sex in the Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia area. She also helps female victims of domestic violence, and along with other community leaders, plans to create a center to provide support for domestic violence victims. Currently, she is the coordinator of the Latina Alliance Agencies against Victims of Gender Violence in DC, MD and VA. She is also a member of the Virginia Anti-Violence Project. Thanks to her dedicated efforts programs now exist for Latina immigrants who are victims of domestic violence.

23. Harriet McCollum- (formerly) Richmond, VA

Harriet McCollum served as Executive Director of the Virginia Commission on Family Violence Prevention from 1994-1999. The Commission was established through legislation to provide leadership and guidance on the development of effective responses to family violence including spouse abuse, child abuse, elder abuse and sexual assault. The Commission completed its work and made its final report during the 2000 Virginia General Assembly Session. The Commission on Family Violence was responsible for the successful introduction of 23 bills, 10 resolutions and 7 budget amendments adopted by the General Assembly. The Commission, its committees and subcommittees actively involved over 1200 Virginians in its work as Harriet provided amazing orchestration — ensuring that issues were thoroughly debated, advanced effectively, and implemented. She assembled an amazing team of graduate students to assist in staffing the Commission—many of whom continue to contribute to the statewide work today!

24. Grace Orsini- Norfolk, VA

Grace is a gifted community educator and leader with the ability to get her audiences to grasp and understand complex issues around sexual and domestic violence while inspiring them to get involved. She has held many leadership positions in both Washington, DC and the Tidewater area where she currently resides. Grace was involved early in the women's movement and helped establish services at military bases in Europe, at times housing battered women in her home. She has been a past board member of VADV and helped found the Wild Women of Wisdom, a group within the Action Alliance supporting older advocates in the field. What makes Grace stand out the most is that she combines her extensive knowledge and experience in domestic and sexual violence with a spiritual awareness and wacky sense of humor that disarms the resistant criminal justice professional, reaches the devout faithful, and earns the respect of her colleagues.

25. Mary Beth Pulsifer- Radford, VA

Mary Beth has been a long time leader and trainer in the sexual and domestic violence field. Taking her extensive knowledge and community education experience from her work at the Women's Resource Center in Radford, Mary Beth was instrumental in the development of the Virginia Training Institute, accompanying staff to provide training nationally for other state coalitions. She served as the first president of the newly transformed Action Alliance, providing the much needed patience, guidance and maturity to lead this newly formed organization. She has also provided leadership to statewide public policy efforts, to direct services doing pioneering work in trauma informed advocacy, and promoted effective community coordination. Mary Beth has always been willing to share her expert knowledge and training abilities across the state, making her a true leader, mentor and friend to this movement.

26. Peggy Sullivan- Prince William County, VA

Peggy has been a pioneer in the sexual and domestic violence field in Virginia for more than 20 years. She helped start the Virginia Training Institute, assisting with design of the institute and its core curriculum. She has played numerous leadership roles in the statewide coalition and has trained hundreds of individuals from judges to social workers and everyone in between. As part of her statewide leadership, Peggy has also worked on legislative issues, using her effective training style to help move politicians forward on important issues. She spent 21 years at the local level in Prince William County helping bring a community together to work on this issue with her grace, understanding and strong leadership style. Peggy's former career as a teacher is where she honed her unique and effective style that caused a Juvenile & Domestic Court Judge to state that everything he had ever learned about domestic violence he learned from Peggy, making him a better judge. This story is not unusual as many seasoned trainers in the field talk about Peggy's ability to bring something new to the table every time.

27. Alice Twining- Virginia Beach, VA

A long-time advocate, trainer and activist in the sexual and domestic violence movement, Alice brings her unique experiences as a survivor of both sexual and domestic violence to her work. She was president of VADV for 5 years, was one of the first trainers for the Training Institute, and helped recruit, hire and support the Co-Directors of VADV. She received training to become an expert witness on domestic violence, sexual assault and child custody cases, bringing an existing expertise on trauma that has continued to develop and benefit many survivors over the years. She has worked on countless advisory boards, committees and statewide task forces. She spent considerable time and energy working to transform VADV and VASSA and creating the Action Alliance, providing wisdom and encouragement to both staff and volunteers throughout the process. Today Alice works part time in Hampton Roads doing clinical supervision, training and expert testimony.

28. Susheela Varky- Richmond, VA

Susheela has been a fearless public policy advocate for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Susheela helped work on legislation that expanded the definition of who may receive a protective order and the speed at which these orders are entered into the statewide database. She has spent countless hours through her work with the Virginia Poverty Law Center advising advocates across the state on legal issues dealing with sexual and domestic violence. In 2009, Susheela started a free legal clinic with the Challa Law Offices to provide legal assistance to undocumented survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Currently, Susheela is serving as governing body facilitator, helping the Alliance board make a strong transition into a leading body for the state. Susheela is an outspoken advocate, a tireless leader, and an inspiration to all who come in contact with her.

29. Marcy Wright- Hampton, VA

Marcy has been a long time advocate in the sexual and domestic violence field, helping to build strong services in the Hampton Roads area, while always supporting statewide coalition work. As the Executive Director of Transitions, Marcy has shared her expertise on managing tiered shelter facilities and engaging in community prevention work with colleagues in her region and throughout the state. Her leadership in the community DELTA project has been instrumental in strengthening primary prevention programming. Her steady, wise voice has been a constant support to her community and to statewide efforts.

30. Women of Color Caucus- Statewide

The Women of Color Caucus formed as an early part of the organizing in the domestic violence coalition, and then carried through into the Action Alliance when the two coalitions transformed into one. At the time this group was formed, it was not popular to expose discrimination in our shelter organizations. Challenging, mentoring and training others who worked within our “system” to not only look at society at large, but within themselves and their own organizations was difficult, trying work. Through the pain of others who had gone

before them, the women of color brought—and continue to bring-- new voices to the movement, seeking justice and equality while singing the lyrics “We who believe in freedom can not rest until it comes.”

About the Action Alliance

The Action Alliance has been Virginia’s leading voice on sexual and domestic violence for 30 years and enhances response and prevention efforts through training, public policy advocacy, public awareness programs, and technical assistance to professionals. To find out more about the Action Alliance, call 804.377.0335, e-mail: info@vsdvalliance.org, or visit us on the web: www.vsdvalliance.org. You may also call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238 (v/tty).

#####