



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jan Baily, PCAR
(717) 728-9740 ext. 120
or
Lucy Gnazzo
(717) 731-8279

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape Partners with Former Pennsylvania
First Lady Michele M. Ridge to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse
Advocates Honored Nationally as New Prevention Resources are Announced**

HERSHEY, Pa. (July 14, 2005) – Gathering in Hershey today to commemorate the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape’s (PCAR) 30th anniversary, Executive Director Delilah Rumburg announced the newly established Vision of Hope Fund aimed at child sexual abuse prevention. Joined by Gov. Ed Rendell, Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, Cumberland Co. DA Skip Ebert, Barbara Hafer, advocates, law enforcement officials, medical professionals and nearly 300 guests, PCAR also honored various individuals for their work in fighting sexual violence across the state.

“We are dedicated to creating a safer world for our children,” remarked Rumburg. “The establishment of this Fund will allow us to ensure that the strides PCAR and our advocates have made over the past 30 years continue to advance our collective mission of ending sexual violence.”

The newly announced Vision of Hope Fund was created in honor of former Pennsylvania First Lady Michele M. Ridge’s exemplary commitment to child abuse prevention in Pennsylvania and throughout the nation. It was established to protect our children from the devastation of child sexual abuse by directing critical funding support to build effective and innovative prevention resources.

“Too often I’ve seen the faces of young, innocent victims whose lives have been devastated by acts of sexual violence,” remarked Mrs. Ridge. “As chairperson of the Fund’s advisory board, it is my hope that this Fund will succeed on behalf of those children whose fullest potential may never be realized by supporting and sustaining innovative child abuse prevention strategies.”

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Throughout the day, PCAR commemorated 30 years of advocacy, action and leadership at the first annual Vision of Hope Luncheon hosted by Mrs. Ridge at The Hotel Hershey. During this event, PCAR recognized the vision and dedication of its many founders and friends. Individuals were honored based on their leadership and work, which has greatly impacted not only child sexual abuse, but all aspects of the anti-sexual violence movement.

Award honorees included **Senator Allen Kukovich**, Leadership Award; **Senator Stewart Greenleaf**, Leadership Award; **Barbara Hafer**, National Sexual Violence Resource Center Award for Outstanding Advocacy & Community Work in Ending Sexual Violence; **M.L. ‘Skip’ Ebert**, Criminal Justice Award; **Red House Communications** (State) and **Lifetime Television for Women** (National), Media & Communications Partner Award and **M&T Bank**, Corporate Partner Award.

Additional award presentations included the Jody Pinto Award to **Jean Maliniak** of The Rape & Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County for outstanding prevention work in ending sexual violence and the Anne Pride Award to **Ann Emmerling** of Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence (Westmoreland Co.) for outstanding leadership in ending sexual violence. These awards are named after two outstanding advocates who personified outstanding leadership, commitment and service to the anti-sexual violence movement.

Lastly, PCAR recognized former **Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge and Michele Ridge** as the inaugural recipients of the Vision of Hope Award for Exemplary Leadership to Protect our Children. During his tenure as Governor and she as First Lady, both worked to create the Governor's Community Partnership for Safe Children, a youth violence prevention initiative aimed at developing strategies to reduce risk factors leading to crimes being committed by and against youth, including sexual assault. Through her leadership as chair of the Children's Partnership, the *Communities That Care*® prevention planning system was implemented and is now used at 128 sites in 58 counties across Pennsylvania.

“We’ve been truly blessed by these advocates,” remarked Rumburg. “Each has played a significant role as one of our partners dedicated to creating a safer world for our children, families and communities.”

Child sexual abuse is a crime of opportunity that occurs every day, in every racial, economic, ethnic or religious group, and in every community. In 2004, there were 4,562 substantiated reports of sexual violence injuries to Pennsylvania children, this equates to

182 classrooms of first graders (assuming an average class size of 25), 285 soccer teams (assuming 16 players per team) and 652 minivans full of children (assuming 7-passenger capacity). PCAR together with Mrs. Ridge have pledged to stop this abuse, by giving the children of Pennsylvania the opportunity to reclaim their innocence.

PCAR is an organization working at the state and national levels to prevent sexual violence. Since its inception in 1975, PCAR has been at the forefront of the anti-sexual violence movement challenging public attitudes, raising public awareness and effecting critical changes in public policy, protocols and responses to sexual violence.

To commemorate its 30 year history, PCAR has and will continue to host a series of events aimed at celebrating its achievements. On March 3, PCAR hosted an evening with Angela Shelton, a filmmaker and incest survivor, to honor survivors at the Pennsylvania State Museum in Harrisburg. From Sept., 27 thru Sept. 30, PCAR will focus on intervention and prevention by hosting the National Sexual Assault Conference at the Station Square Sheraton, Pittsburgh. And on Nov. 3, PCAR will celebrate leadership and vision with a commemorative book launch featuring Dr. Jean Kilbourne in State College. For more information on these events, visit www.pcar.org.

To contact your local sexual violence crisis center call (888) 772-PCAR.

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Individuals or businesses who wish to contribute to the Vision of Hope Fund, may contact (800) 692-7445 ext. 119 or forward contributions to PCAR/Vision of Hope Fund, 125 North Enola Dr., Enola, PA 17025. For more information on the Vision of Hope Fund, visit www.pcar.org/visionofhope.