The Eighteenth Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

Excerpts from a statement from The National Network to End Domestic Violence

September 13, 2012 commemorated the 18th Anniversary of the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This landmark law, passed in 1994, has forever transformed and improved our nation’s response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

VAWA supports effective coordinated community responses, leveraging state and local resources to address and prevent these serious and pervasive crimes. Such coordinated community responses have been at the heart of our nation’s progress toward reducing domestic and sexual violence. Since VAWA first passed, more victims feel comfortable coming forward, crime rates have decreased, laws against domestic violence have been strengthened, and communities across the country are safer and more secure.

VAWA has been reauthorized twice since 1994 and each reauthorization has built upon the successes of the past and improved coverage, protection and services for victims. Despite successes, VAWA has expired – jeopardizing current protections and failing to address important safety issues. In 2012, Congress must pass a strong, bipartisan VAWA reauthorization that safely and effectively protects all victims. Specifically, it must include protections to meet the urgent needs of Native American women, immigrants, LGBT victims, those on college campuses and Communities of Color. The law must reauthorize the key grant programs in order to improve and expand services to victims in need. It must build upon the landmark housing protections that ensure victims are not evicted from subsidized housing based on the abusive actions of their perpetrators. It must efficiently support local programs to ensure the stability of services to victims.

“Today as VAWA turns 18, we consider the young people born in 1994 who will benefit from VAWA but know that it falls short to meet their needs and many other victims’ needs…”

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Stay informed about the status of VAWA through NNEDV’s website: nnedv.org.

URGE your Member of Congress to prioritize post-election passage of a VAWA reauthorization bill that safely and effectively protects all victims. Visit www.congress.org for information on how to contact your US Senator and Representative.
Invisible No More

The number is staggering: 19,000 servicemen and women in 2010, 19,000 of our brave women and men – who have dedicated their lives to serving our country – met the same fate in 2010. These 19,000 men and women were not killed in the line of duty. They were not injured in the line of duty. The reality is perhaps more shocking: in 2010 alone, 19,000 service women and men were raped or sexually assaulted in the military. Compounding this, only 13.5% of the victims of military rape or sexual assault report the crime up the chain of command.

These statistics – prepared and released by the Department of Defense – set the background for the incredibly powerful documentary The Invisible War. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Kirby Dick, this 2012 documentary has already changed military policy. On April 14, 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta viewed the documentary The Invisible War. Two days later, the Department of Defense announced a change in the way that sexual assault and rape cases are handled by the military, removing some of the discretion given to lower-level commanders in reporting rape and assault cases.

The film tells the stories of former military – largely women – who have suffered rape and sexual assault at the hands of fellow service members. These cases span the decades, from a male soldier brutally gang-raped in a chow hall in the 1970’s, to a female sailor repeatedly drugged and raped in the 1980’s, to the Tailhook scandal of the 1990’s, to the 2010 case of a female Marine raped by her commanding officer after being ordered to drink with him beforehand. While the facts of each rape and assault differ, a common thread binds these survivors’ stories together: none of them received assistance or support from the military and none of them saw their attackers punished.

In addition to a lack of support and justice, these survivors were often treated as the wrongdoer. Several women highlighted in the film were charged with adultery, conduct unbecoming an officer or public intoxication as a direct result of reporting their rapes. Another woman – a nine and a half year veteran of the Army – was denied military benefits after leaving service. Yet another woman is still battling the Veterans’ Administration for coverage for medical treatment for the injuries that she sustained in her rape. Almost all of the survivors profiled had attempted suicide as a direct result of their rape or sexual assault.

One of the biggest obstacles to ending this epidemic of military rape and sexual assault is the system itself. Victims are required to report the crime to their commander, who may be a friend of the perpetrator or may have committed the crime himself. Commanders have a disincentive to report these crimes up the chain of command, as doing so would demonstrate a lack of control over their unit. Tellingly, the cases that are reported rarely result in real justice for the victims. In 2010, 3,158 cases of sexual assault or rape were handled by the military justice system. Of those 3,158 cases, only 175 of the attackers received a sentence of jail time.

There is hope on the horizon, however. This film – which featured interviews from both Republican and Democratic Senators and Representatives – has grabbed the attention of politicians from both sides of the aisle. Representative Jackie Speier of California has introduced HR 3435, The STOP Act, which would take cases of rape and sexual assault out of the normal chain of command and place them in the jurisdiction of an impartial office within the military, but staffed by civilian and military experts. A group of survivors is seeking a similar result (an ability to report these cases to civilian authorities) via a lawsuit against the Department of Defense. This lawsuit – featured in the film – was dismissed by a federal district court in December 2011, but has been appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Invisible War is currently available for download online, and will be released in DVD format on October 23, 2012. See the movie, and spread the word about it. Contact your United States Senators and Representatives, and demand that they act to change the system of military justice for rape and sexual assault crimes. Educating yourself about the military rape epidemic is just the first step to ensure that these victims are no longer “invisible,” and that these crimes will no longer be seen as inevitable.

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK | https://www.facebook.com/blackbumcenterpa
Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®
The International Men’s March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault & Gender Violence

In Westmoreland County, presented by Blackburn Center

We had 300 people at our inaugural event in April 2011, and jumped to 400 people in April 2012. Our goal for 2013 is to top 500! We want to fill that track at Lynch Field. We know we can make it with your help. You can:

- Mark the date in your calendar NOW: April 20, 2013.
- Tell your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors about this important – and FUN – event.
- Gather a team to join the more than twenty teams that walked this past year.

For individual and team registration information, and details about sponsorship opportunities, please call 724-837-9540, X104.

ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH TO Walk a Mile in Her Shoes?

This annual event sends two clear messages:

1. Most men don’t condone violence. (In fact, the majority of men are good guys who care!)

2. Sexual and domestic violence are not just “women’s issues”— they impact everyone, women and men, and we can ALL make a difference by challenging the social norms that perpetuate this violence.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
APRIL 20, 2013
Lynch Field, Greensburg, PA

MANY THANKS
to those who supported the Special Occasion Card: A Greeting with a Purpose

In Memory
Louise Barton
Ina Seibert
Ella Beveridge
Ina Seibert
Paul Carmichael
Joe and Patty Kemerer
Mariann Cute Clark
Anonymous
Barbara J. Dorundo
Georgine Dorundo
Frances Fontanini
Sharon Bartolotta
Sue Goettlicher
Mr. and Mrs. John Goettlicher
Julia Hinger
Barbara Nakles
Clara Hoffman
Jim and Jackie Timko
Lenore Huffer
Ina Seibert
Pamela Kaezzele
Georgine Dorundo
Mothers
Anonymous
Joseph Matt
Georgine Dorundo
Mary B. Potocknik
Mary Catherine Motchar
Alice Rush
Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Delaini
Marie Timko-Lawrence
Jim and Jackie Timko
Mary Louise Rush Truxal
Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Delaini

In Honor
Donna Chanan
Virginia Turner
Catherine Cook
Jeanne M. Cook
Elizabeth Courtney
Patti Benton
Raymond Dorundo, Sr.
Georgine Dornundo
Julie Ebersole
Benny and Betsy Borza
Rachel Hatch
Glenn and Rebecca Davidson
Jacquelyn Kwiatkowski
Deirdre Kwiatkowski
Rosemary Lewis
Morrison Lewis

Vivian and James Wilhite
Anonymous

Alyce Markovich
Helen Hopkinson
Jean McKenna
Ann, Ernie, Sam and Jake Emmerling
Carmella Neil
Calli-Marie and Alasandra
Mary Quenzler
Rob and Kim Stanko
Ann M. Schrems
Bill, Cathy and Jessica Reeves
Polly Sherman
Patti Benton
Sarah Stanko
Kim and Rob Stanko
Sara Waugaman
Anonymous

General
Anonymous
Jeanne Anton

Tara Bird
Harry and Gayle Blansett
Anthony John Botti
Michael Bove
Sally Brautigam
Gina Burkett
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Cazden
Suzanne Conley
Dr. and Mrs. William B. Courtney
Linell Davis
Robert Davis
Rich and Roz Douds
Mrs. Virginia Essex
Rebecca Gardner
Kathy Hager
Richard M. Harrold
Tim and Diane Johnson
JoAnne Kaylor
David and Terry Kelley
David and Cathy Mastrorocco
Ruth McDonald
Jean McKenna
North Huntingdon
Bible Study Group
Rehoboth Deacons
Karen Rich Douglas
Thomas and Diana Roberts
Irene C. Rothschild
Frances Sabo
Stephen Stebodnik
Donald J. Snyder, Jr.
Frank and Mary Stillman
Nancy Wallace
Stephen and Linda Zimmerman
As the holiday season approaches, please keep our needs list (BELOW) in mind if you’re looking for an alternative to traditional gift-giving. Making a gift of items from the needs list, or donating the financial resources to purchase those items, is a wonderful way to honor someone special in your life. We’ll be happy to send a card acknowledging your gift. Donating items helps to sustain the shelter program, and maintain the support groups the agency provides for women and children. Some of these items are made available to women and their children who are establishing their own homes and need support with basic household items.

Please put the items in **bold italics** at the top of your shopping list, and help Blackburn Center manage donations by bringing new items. If you have used items to donate, the agency can provide a list of thrift shops in the area that make items available to Blackburn Center shelter residents at no cost to them.

### THE HOLIDAY GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING…

#### KITCHEN
- Baking pans: 9” x 13”
- Can openers (hand-held)
- Coffee (regular)
- Coffee creamer
- Cooking oil
- Dish drainers
- Dishtowels
- Drink boxes

#### Flatware
- Food items: any canned food, other non-perishables, etc.

#### Clear plastic storage boxes with lids
- Tall kitchen garbage bags
- Packaged snacks for lunches
- Paper products: paper towels, napkins
- Paper towel holders
- Skillets
- Small appliances: coffee maker, can opener, knife sharpener

#### Spices and condiments
- Tea towels and dishcloth sets
- Zip-lock bags (gallon size)

#### BATHROOM
- Bath mats
- Heating pads
- Paper products: toilet paper
- Plungers
- Shower curtains and rings
- Soap dispensers
- Toilet brushes
- Bath towels: durable

#### BEDROOM
- Alarm clocks
- Bed pillows
- Bed-in-a-bag sets
- Blankets: twin & full
- Mattress pads: quilted, twin & full

#### Nightgowns: women’s one-size fits all
- Pajamas: women’s one-size-fits-most & extra-large sizes, teen boys
- Sleep shirts: large & extra-large
- Slippers with gripper soles

#### MISCELLANEOUS
- Baby monitors
- Batteries: AAA
- Bottled water
- Brooms
- Buckets
- Canvas storage cubes: 10 1/2”W x 9”H x 7”D
- Diapers: size 3 & 4
- Extension cords
- Flashlights
- Gasoline cards: GetGo or Sheetz
- Gift cards: Walmart or Target

#### Personal Care
- Hair dryers
- Laundry detergent
- Light bulbs: 60-watt & 3-way
- Mops
- Nasal aspirators
- Outdoor garbage bags
- Phone cards
- Play doh
- Sunscreen
- Sweat suits: all adult sizes
- Telephones
- Tool kits
- Umbrellas
- Underpants: women’s & teen boy sizes

**PLEASE NOTE:** Deliver donations to Blackburn Center’s administrative offices on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 4 pm. Please call if you cannot bring your donation during regular business hours. We can make other arrangements if necessary.