



For Immediate Release

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Catholic Charities Phoenix House Launches Community Stalking Awareness Campaign

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Ia – January is National Stalking Awareness Month, a time to focus on a crime that affects 3.4 million victims a year.⁽¹⁾ This year’s theme, “Stalking: Know It. Name It. Stop It.” challenges the nation to fight this dangerous crime by learning more about it.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, yet many victims and criminal justice professionals underestimate its seriousness and impact. In one of five cases, stalkers use weapons to harm or threaten victims ⁽²⁾ and stalking is one of the significant risk factors for femicide (homicide of women) in abusive relationships ⁽³⁾. Victims suffer anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression at much higher rates than the general population, and many lose time from work or have to move as a result of their victimization. ⁽⁴⁾

Stalking is difficult to recognize, investigate, and prosecute. Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime but a series of acts, a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear. Stalking may take many forms, such as assaults, threats, vandalism, burglary, or animal abuse, as well as unwanted cards, calls, gifts, or visits. One in four victims reports that the stalker uses technology, such as computers, global positioning system devices, or hidden cameras, to track the victim’s daily activities.⁽⁵⁾ Stalkers fit no standard psychological profile, and many stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, making it difficult for authorities to investigate and prosecute their crimes.

Communities that understand stalking, however, can support victims and combat the crime. “If more people learn to recognize stalking,” said Diane McKee, Program Coordinator at Catholic Charities Phoenix House, “we have a better chance to protect victims and prevent tragedies.”

For additional resources to help promote National Stalking Awareness Month, please visit <http://stalkingawarenessmonth.org> and www.ovw.usdoj.gov.

The Phoenix House Domestic Violence Shelter and Sexual Abuse Program is a service of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Des Moines. The Phoenix House offers prevention and education in Council Bluffs and the surrounding areas and is a community resource on violence-related issues. Services include a 24-hour emergency shelter and crisis phone line, court advocacy, educational groups and outreach to underserved populations. For more information visit www.CatholicCharitiesDM.org or call (712) 256-2059 ext.1002.

“Guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church, we serve all people in need with compassion and competence, advocate for justice, and encourage all people of good will to share in these efforts.”

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1 Baum et al., *Stalking Victimization in the United States*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs,

Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/svus.pdf> (accessed September 29, 2009).

2 Ibid.

3 Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., “Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multi-site Case Control Study,”

American Journal of Public Health 93 (2003): 7.

4 Ibid.

5 Baum, *Stalking Victimization in the United States*.