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NEWS RELEASE

Date: October 8, 2003
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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AWARDS \$160,000 FOR CRIME VICTIMS *Funds Bridge the Gap Between Spiritual Support and Victims Services*

WHAT: PRESS CONFERENCE
WHEN: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8, 2003
10:30AM

WHERE: DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1421 ARCH ST.
FIRST FLOOR PRESS ROOM

SPEAKERS:

1. District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham
2. Deborah Spungen, founder of the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia and mother of Nancy Spungen, who was murdered 25 years ago by punk rocker Sid Vicious
3. Roberta Roper, founder of Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center and mother of Stephanie Roper, who was murdered in 1982
4. Imam Naadim AbdulKhabyr, Philadelphia Police Clergy and Majlis ash-Shura

District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham, victims of crime and representatives from several Community Partners today announced that Philadelphia is one of five cities in the country to receive a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to help victims of crime and their families. The Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia will receive \$160,000 in each of the next three years to build the relationship between victim service agencies and faith-based organizations. The grant encompasses all denominations and victims of all violent crimes.

“After the murder of our daughter Nancy 25 years ago, my husband and I became aware that our spiritual leader was uncomfortable and uncertain how to support us in our difficult time,” said Deborah Spungen, who will co-direct the project with Rev. Myra Maxwell.

When Roberta Roper's daughter Stephanie was kidnapped, raped and murdered in 1982, Roberta and her family initially received loving support from their faith community. As the family prepared for the trial of the two men, many of Stephanie's friends asked to be kept informed. Thinking that the information could be provided through church bulletins, the family was not prepared for the rejection that request prompted.

Additionally, a clergy member who promised to be with the family at trial was never seen again.

“Too often faith communities are not prepared to deal with the anger and raw suffering of victims of criminal violence,” said Roberta Roper. “Instead, they too quickly ask the victim to grant forgiveness to their offender. Likewise, service providers are seldom trained to meet the spiritual needs of crime victims, especially when those concepts of faith may be vastly different than their own.”

According to the Office for Victims of Crime, crime victims are faced with a barrage of problems and emotions in the aftermath of violent crime, ranging from loss of income to post-traumatic stress disorder to a crisis of faith. In order to provide comprehensive services to the victim, there is a critical need to expand and improve the services available to victims of crime by creating networks and building relationships to bridge the gap between faith-based organizations and victims of crime.\

The goal of this program is to build the relationship by offering seminars and trainings. Seminars conducted for victim services agencies will focus on how a victim’s spirituality may affect their feeling about being a victim. An example might be a Jewish woman’s conflict of being a victim of domestic violence with her feelings of Shalom Bayit, or ‘peace in the home.’ Seminars for clergy focus on equipping religious leaders with the knowledge and skill they need to handle the anger and suffering victims may experience by teaching clergy about the criminal justice system, victim services and the effects of victimization.

Additionally, a resource directory will be created as a reference for both clergy and victims. Victims often turn to either a faith leader or an agency for support. This project equips faith leaders with the knowledge and resources to assist victims and connect their congregants to the appropriate services. Likewise, advocates can more skillfully assess their clients’ spiritual needs to make the proper referral.

Grant funds will not be used for religious activities, such as worship, prayer or devotional Bible study. However, research shows that about 47% of the city’s population is affiliated with a congregation. The leaders of these congregations are in a position to provide needed services to victims. About 87% of the Philadelphia congregations already provide social services in the way of job training, food banks and after school programs, so this will be a natural extension of programs already in place.

Also, the funding comes from the Office for Victims of Crime Victims Fund. No taxpayer money is used. The money comes from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds and penalties collected from federal crimes.

Each city chosen receives \$160,000 for the first year. Funding for years two and three is contingent upon evaluation and availability. The other cities are Baltimore, Md., Nashville, Tenn., St. Paul, Minn., and Richmond, Calif. (near Oakland.)

Key Supporters In Attendance:

1. Joseph Blake, West Philadelphia Partnership
2. Jennie Bogerhoff, Center City Crime Victim Services
3. Cynthia Figueroa, Women Against Abuse
4. Charles Greene, Senator Rick Santorum's Office
5. Curtis Jones, Representative James Roebuck Jr.'s Office
6. Rev. Helen M.C. Jones, Tragedy Response Unit Support Team (T.R.U.S.T.)
7. Inspector Jeanette Lake-Dooley, Philadelphia Police Department
8. Carol Lavery, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
9. SaraKay Smullens, Sabbath of Domestic Peace
10. George Stern, Northwest Interfaith Movement
11. Ronald Waters, PA House of Representatives
12. Marcia Thomas-Bayne, U.S. Attorney's Office

