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Strangers help woman escape abusive church and marriage

Survivor breaks her silence to speak at PADV events

ATLANTA, October 2, 2008– Tranteegus Allen’s story reads like a made for TV movie. But it’s not; it happened in metro Atlanta. Allen was forced at the age of 17 to marry her pastor’s son, a boy she had grown up with. She experienced controlling abuse by both her husband and her church. Her husband, who took over his father’s church as pastor, would quote 1 Corinthians 7:4 “The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband” while he was raping her. She suffered a miscarriage because she was so badly beaten. You can hear Allen recount her tumultuous journey at two events sponsored by Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV) on October 2, 2008, and October 23, 2008.

Allen will speak at PADV’s *Silent No More* candlelight vigil, scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 2 in front of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Visitor’s Center, 450 Auburn Avenue. The second event, the *Domestic Violence Speak-Out*, is scheduled for Thursday, October 23 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Gwinnett Justice and Administrative Center, Breezeway, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville. Both events are free and open to the public and are being held to observe National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

One in three women will experience intimate partner violence. Consider these facts:

- From August 2007 through August 2008, there were 78 deaths in Georgia as a result of intimate partner violence.
- In 2007, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation reported 55,000 cases of family violence in the state.
- Gwinnett County had the highest number of women murdered by a man.

Despite years of controlling abuse from her husband and enslavement from her church, Allen found hope and faith again because of the kindness of strangers who refused to turn away and were willing to help her escape. “By sharing my story, I hope to encourage the faith-based community to support domestic violence survivors by learning more about the issue and collaborating with PADV or their local domestic violence program,” said Tranteegus Allen. “It is the obligation of the church to make every person accountable for their brothers and sisters in Christ.”

“The faith-based community needs to realize that domestic violence isn’t a ‘marital problem,’ but rather a national epidemic affecting women from all religious backgrounds,” said Cathy Willis Spraeetz, president and CEO for PADV. “A domestic violence survivor may struggle to understand what’s happening to her in relation to her faith. Therefore, it’s critical to communicate to her that she is not to blame nor is she responsible for his behavior.”

Faith-based communities can:

- Seek expert assistance from PADV or other domestic violence advocacy organizations.
- Schedule training on intimate partner violence for the congregation.
- Refer her only to specialized domestic violence advocacy programs, not to couples counseling.
- Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities.

About DVAM Activities: The eighth annual *Silent No More* candlelight vigil and seventh annual *Domestic Violence Survivor Speak-Out* events are held in October to observe National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, celebrate domestic violence survivors, and honor those who were killed because of domestic abuse.

The vigil is hosted by Partnership Against Domestic Violence, Office of the Fulton County District Attorney Victim Services, Fulton Solicitor General’s Office Victim Services, YWCA of Greater Atlanta, Hands On Atlanta and Zion Hill Community Development Corporation. Activities will include inspiring music and uplifting dancing. The program will conclude with an immensely powerful personalized candlelight vigil to honor Georgia’s victims.

The Domestic Violence Survivor Speak-Out is hosted by Partnership Against Domestic Violence, Gwinnett Family Violence Task Force and the Gwinnett Solicitor General’s Office. Other activities at the event will include a musical performance and a “Remember My Name” Rose Ceremony.

About PADV: Partnership Against Domestic Violence is the largest and one of the oldest nonprofit domestic violence organizations in Georgia. For more than 30 years, PADV has provided professional, compassionate, and empowering support to battered women and their children in metro Atlanta. Support includes a 24-hour crisis line, two emergency shelters in metro Atlanta, supportive housing, support groups, legal advocacy, and a teen dating violence prevention program. To learn more about domestic violence and PADV visit www.padv.org

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