FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) will present its 2012 Voices Of Courage Awards at Bethel Lutheran Church. Since 1999, WCASA has presented these awards to coincide with Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). They recognize and honor the outstanding work of Wisconsin individuals and organizations that have exceeded the very highest standards in their dedicated efforts to end sexual violence and support survivors. This year’s ceremony will include a luncheon, commencing at 12:00 p.m. Admission is $20.

Sexual violence is pervasive in Wisconsin as well as across the nation. The numbers are quite sobering; every hour and a half, a sexual assault is reported to Wisconsin police. The most recent comprehensive national survey found that one in five women, and one in seventy-one men, are sexually violated during the course of their lives.

“This ceremony is our opportunity to celebrate the courageous efforts of those doing superlative work to end sexual violence,” said Pennie Meyers, Interim Executive Director at WCASA. “Through their work and commitment to ensure a compassionate response to sexual assault victims in all systems around the state, victims have a greater opportunity to heal. They are at the forefront of collectively challenging behaviors. WCASA is excited to be part of a movement that has so many dedicated, talented, and caring people around our state who are making it their life legacy to care for those impacted by this horrific crime and to end sexual violence.”

This year the Annual awards are given in eight categories, and the Voices of Courage recipients are:
• Ellen Schwartz, Advocate, Sexual Assault Recovery Program of Family Services of Southern Wisconsin & Richard Cowan, (her husband) of Green Co. in the Community Support Category

• Miriam Falk, Assistant District Attorney, Milwaukee County, in the Criminal Justice Category

• Naomi Lafferty, of Passages, Inc, and Scott, Wisconsin resident, in the Courage category

• Carmen Hotvedt, Violence Prevention Specialist, University Health Services, UW-Madison, in the Prevention Education category

• Pauline Mau, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, Monroe Clinic ER, in the Health & Human Services category

• Vicki Biehn, Rural Services Coordinator & Therapist, Sexual Assault Services of Lutheran Social Services, in the Victim/Survivor Advocacy category

• Senator Julie Lassa (D, 24th Senate District), Senator Robert Cowles (R, 2nd Senate District), and Representative Jim Steineke (R 5th Assembly District) in the Public Policy category

• Arline Hillestad, Executive Director of the Family Center, and Elizabeth Ghilardi, Forensic Interview Program Supervisor, Child Protection Center, Children’s Hospital, in the Lifetime Achievement category

WCASA invites advocates, allies, supporters, and members from the community at large to join them on April 28th to celebrate the work of these recipients.

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