



The comprehensive resource on domestic violence

## Celebrating 25 Years of Support, Education and Advocacy

**September 30, 2014**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **2014 Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Advocacy**

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2014 Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Advocacy. The awards will be presented at the Kickoff to Domestic Violence Awareness Month Event, Wednesday, October 1, 2014 10 a.m. in the Museum Gallery at the Ohio Statehouse.

ODVN chose to create the award to honor Tina Croucher and Tina's parents, Elsa and Jim Croucher, pioneers in the field of domestic violence education. Picking up the pieces of their shattered lives after their daughter, Tina was murdered by an abusive ex-boyfriend, Elsa and Jim created a dating abuse program presented to thousands of students across Ohio and worked diligently to pass the "Tina Croucher Act."

The awards this year will be given to Alexandria M. Ruden from the Legal Aid society of Cleveland and Michael R. Smalz from the Ohio Poverty Law Center. We will also be honoring the late Mary Hendrickson, Executive Director of New Directions, a domestic violence shelter in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

"We are especially delighted to be honoring Alexandria, Mike and Mary in our 25th anniversary year," said Nancy Neylon, Executive Director. "All three honorees have been a part of ODVN's work to end domestic violence from our beginnings. Mary was a founding board member of ODVN and Alexandria and Mike have been involved with critical public policy initiatives".

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**Alexandria M. Ruden**, of the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has been providing legal services to domestic violence survivors since Ohio's law went into effect in 1978. Alexandria has not only provided the best in quality legal services to survivors, she has worked to ensure positive systems response to survivors in the courts where she works as well as in statewide policy through her work on committees and advocating in the state legislature. Alexandria has had a major role in proposing, drafting and supporting legislation and court rules that positively impact domestic violence survivors. In addition, Alexandria has served as a volunteer attorney for ODVN in writing amicus briefs in Supreme Court of Ohio cases that have had significant policy impact for domestic violence. Alexandria

is the co-author of Ohio Domestic Violence Law for Thomas Reuters with Cleveland Municipal Court Administrative Judge Ronald Adrine. The book is updated each year and serves as the “go to” reference in Ohio for domestic violence law.

**Michael R. Smalz**, Senior Attorney of the Ohio Poverty Law Center has served as staff attorney at the Ohio State Legal Services Association State Support Unit since November 1988. Mike has played a significant role in proposing, drafting and supporting domestic violence and domestic relations legislation and court rules in Ohio over the past 25 years. Mike worked closely with ODVN and co-authored the Ohio Domestic Violence Network’s Self-help Legal Manual for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking and the ODVN Legal Manual for Incarcerated Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking. Mike also convenes and facilitates the statewide Family Law Task Force for legal aid attorneys and advocates. Mike serves on numerous statewide boards and is currently chair of the Family Violence Prevention Council at the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

**Mary Hendrickson** died unexpectedly on June 7 doing the work she loved. The domestic violence movement lost a true and passionate advocate with the passing of a great spirit. Mary served as Executive Director of New Directions, the domestic violence shelter of Knox County in Mount Vernon, Ohio, an organization she helped to found in 1983 and had been its only executive director.

She was quiet, kind, modest and deeply empathetic, and her unassuming presence could belie the deep passion and drive she had for her calling. Her sustained commitment to violence-free futures has made a lasting impact in countless lives – both of domestic and sexual violence survivors served locally, as well as colleagues in the local nonprofit community and peers in Ohio’s domestic violence network. Sensitive to the perspectives of diverse cultures, religions and LGBTQ issues, her style was inclusive and respectful of individual differences. She had a knack for inspiring a larger vision while always being pragmatic. Mary was the first recipient of the Elaine Mayhew Award in 2010, given by the Knox County Democratic Women to honor local women who exemplify the philosophy of community service. She is greatly missed by all those who knew and worked with her.

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The Ohio Domestic Violence Network is Ohio’s leading voice for domestic violence survivors and their allies. ODVN was founded in 1989 to ensure the elimination of domestic violence and serves as a critical source for professional training, resources, public education, and policy advocacy to survivors, domestic violence agencies, the justice system, the health care system, governmental agencies, and other organizations.

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