How Your Organization Can Generate Awareness & Foster Action in the Fight Against Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an under-recognized problem with devastating and even life-threatening consequences. Throughout the year, there are many holidays and observances that provide organizations like yours the opportunity to honor older individuals and raise awareness of elder abuse. These observances provide unique opportunities to engage public attention, enlist public support, and generate activity and involvement at a grassroots level:

May

- Older Americans Month
- Mother's Day

June

- **June 15th- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**
- Father's Day

September

- Grandparents Day

October

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- National Residents' Rights Month

November

- National Family Caregivers Month

April

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week
- National Sexual Violence Awareness Month
- National Financial Literacy Month

To maximize these opportunities, the NCEA is enlisting action from communities and organizations that can affect long-lasting changes in the lives of vulnerable seniors. We invite and encourage you to "Take a Stand" against elder abuse by planning or participating in community activities that coincide with Older Americans Month, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and other events to generate public attention.

The NCEA has compiled the following list of examples of how your organization can "Take a Stand" in the fight and draw attention to the problem of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Some activities focus on specific observances, such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, while others may be conducted at any time of year. Some suggestions involve a greater commitment than others. All of the suggestions, however, are intended to help your organization engage community members in order to make long-lasting differences in the lives of vulnerable adults.

Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse.

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!

- This year the White House is hosting a day-long symposium on June 14th to raise awareness of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation that will be webcast live on the White House website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/live). The day will be broken into two segments, one in the morning beginning at 9:00am ET focusing on prevention and another in the afternoon beginning at 1:30pm ET on responses to elder abuse. In recognition of this historic event, you can host a "watch party" on the 14th to view the event and pose questions to panel experts on Facebook and Twitter.

- Organize a candlelight vigil or a march down Main Street in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

- Host a rally on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and invite seniors, advocates, spokespersons, and government officials to talk about the issues and the ways that citizens can become involved in prevention. Don't forget to invite the local press!

- Distribute elder abuse public awareness materials at a local sporting event, concert, or fair.

- Ask local banks or utility companies to include small elder abuse awareness inserts with the May or June statements. You can find fact sheets on the NCEA website to use or modify for the inserts, and don't forget to mention any other World Day activities your community is holding.

- Purple is the color that has been designated for elder abuse awareness by the International Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. Wear purple in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15th.

- Partner with a local nursing home for a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day barbeque or picnic. Include activities and food for residents and their families, staff, and the community. Ask volunteers to bring food and games to play and coordinate the activities with nursing home staff. Invite the press for added exposure and increased elder abuse awareness.

- Start an elder abuse awareness group on a social networking site, like "Facebook," and encourage "friends" to join the group. Provide links to information and advocacy resources. Start a campaign to get "X" number of "friends" to join by World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

- Hold a community yard sale at a central location such as a senior center or church/synagogue with proceeds going to an elder abuse support group or community outreach efforts to help elderly in crisis.

- Organize a "Letter to the Editor" writing campaign to raise awareness not only of elder abuse but of the local resources that are available through APS, area agency on aging offices, and other organizations. Be sure to include contact information and hotline/helpline phone numbers as well as web addresses for relevant organizations.

Art for Awareness' Sake

For many reasons, elder abuse has been a difficult topic to capture and sustain public attention. However, some organizations have been successful in using the arts to engage public involvement to promote difficult causes. Here are some suggestions:

- Organize an Elder Abuse Awareness Quilt Show/Competition depicting themes related to elder abuse. Entries may be solicited from senior centers, quilting groups, sewing circles, educational institutions, scout troops, individuals, and others. Mount the entries in a local mall and ask shoppers to vote on their favorites. Since quilts are larger than life and eye-catching, they can attract a great deal of attention.

- ClothesLine Show: Sponsor a t-shirt design contest or activity with a youth group or scout troop. Ask contestants to depict the themes related to elder abuse. Display the shirts on a clothesline at a senior center, health fair, or other World Day event.

- Student Arts or Essay Competition: Young people are dedicating themselves to a host of social causes, and elder abuse prevention can capitalize on this enthusiasm. Work with your state Attorney General's office, Division of Aging, Department of Education, local newspaper, school district, or other organization to sponsor a similar contest on a theme such as: Why Should *I* Care About Elder Abuse? Use winning entries in local campaigns, and display art work in community libraries and public buildings.

Create a Community Safety Net

- Organize a "Chore Store": Elders who still live in their own homes may be finding it more difficult to maintain their houses or need help running errands. Have a community group, senior center, neighborhood association, or faith-based organization develop a directory of members willing to share time or resources at no cost or greatly reduced fees (for example, lawn work, small repairs). Circulate the directory to elders who may need these services.

- Include elder fraud or scam alerts in community and neighborhood association newsletters.

- Start or join a local elder justice coalition. Alliances among local entities who have regular contact with seniors, such as aging services providers, health care professionals, long-term care staff, skilled nursing home staff, law enforcement, and others, have been shown to improve communication and coordination among collaborators and to increase protection of older persons' health, safety, and/or financial security. Contact the NCEA for more information about starting or reinvigorating your own local elder justice community coalition.

For More Information:

- Check out the *Community Guide to Raise World Awareness on Adult Abuse,* developed by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, for more ideas on how to become involved. To access the toolkit, visit the "WEAAD Resources" page at: http://www.inpea.net/weaad.html .

- To download logos, posters, and other public awareness materials to commemorate Older Americans Month from the US Administration on Aging website, go to: http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/Press_Room/Observances/2012/Older_Americans.aspx.

- For a wealth of suggestions on raising awareness of crime victims and their rights, download the 2012 *National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide*, online at: http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2012/index.html

- Visit the website of the National Center on Elder Abuse/NCEA: www.ncea.aoa.gov , or contact us by email: ncea-info@aoa.hhs.gov , by phone: 1-855-500-3537, or by mail:

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