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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE HONORS LOCAL WOMAN FOR LEADERSHIP**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - (June 20, 2007) Sandra L. Merin, a dedicated child advocate at Safe Shores~ the DC Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), is being honored by Washington, D.C. based National Children's Alliance (NCA) as the 2007 recipient of the *Individual Volunteer Leadership Award*. The award will be presented at NCA's Annual Awards Luncheon on June 20, 2007 from 11:45 A.M to 1:15 P.M. at the Renaissance Washington D.C. Hotel.

This award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated perseverance and distinguished service to a local Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The award criteria are imagination, creativity, dedication and innovation. Ms. Merin is being recognized for her determined efforts at garnering support for Safe Shores in Washington DC.

Ms. Merin began her volunteer work for Safe Shores six years ago. In that time, Safe Shores Director Michele Booth Cole, J.D., explains, "Sandy has progressed from occasionally dropping off donated items to now serving as President of Safe Shores' Board of Directors."

She has donated time, energy, resources, even a room in her home to the cause. Her commitment to children is reflected in her generosity and "[has] impacts at multiple levels of the community from the U.S. Congress to local Girl Scout troops," explains Booth Cole.

Ms. Merin has solicited the donation of countless items from a dishwasher and high end copy machine to kids' toiletries from Johnson & Johnson and frozen food from American Frozen Foods Insititute. She has organized the collection of foster care bags with new items for children with an estimated value of \$30,000 in 2005 alone!

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With her constant focus on people and relationships and fantastic networking skills, Ms. Merin hosts and an annual dinner party introducing Safe Shores to both new and loyal donors, has cultivated a relationship between Safe Shores and The George Washington University resulting in free conference space for Safe Shores, has reached out to the spouses of U.S. House Appropriations Committee members by hosting a luncheon to increase awareness, and introduced Safe Shores to Regina Schofield, Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice. The list goes on.

Friend, and wife of Congressman John Tanner (D-TN), Betty Ann Tanner, praises Merin for working “tirelessly on behalf of abused children through Safe Shares.” Tanner goes on to say, “I have been inspired by her dedication to at-risk children in the DC area—so much that she has encouraged me along with many others to become an active part of this cause.”

National Children’s Alliance is a nationwide not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to assist communities seeking to improve their response to child abuse by supporting the development, growth and continuation of Children’s Advocacy Centers.

Based on a model originally developed by U.S. Congressman Bud Cramer in 1985, Children’s Advocacy Centers are child-friendly facility-based programs that intervene and investigate cases of severe child abuse. CACs provided services to 171,378 children in 2006.

Designed as a welcoming place for children to be heard, Children’s Advocacy Centers are programs that allow professionals from child protection services, law enforcement, criminal justice, victim advocacy agencies, and medical and mental health communities to work in a collaborative way to better serve child victims of abuse.

For more information visit [www.nca-online.org](http://www.nca-online.org) or contact Amy Woodman at 202-548-0090 ext. 114.