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Contact: Jada Irwin
202-645-4436
jirwin@safeshores.org

**SAFE SHORES – THE DC CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER HONORS
PROMINENT FOUNDATIONS AND LOCAL LEADERS FOR
SUPPORT IN FIGHT AGAINST CHILD ABUSE**

***Washington DC ranks highest in the rate of child abuse per capita in the nation, according to the US
Department of Health and Human Services***

Washington, DC – March 24, 2011 -- To commemorate the start of National Child Abuse Prevention Month this April, Safe Shores – The DC Children’s Advocacy Center – Washington, D.C.’s leading nonprofit organization serving victims of child abuse and witnesses to violence- today recognized representatives from both Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton’s office and the DC Mayor’s office, as well as key foundation donors, for their ongoing support and commitment to protecting Washington, DC children. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families 2009 Child Maltreatment Report, Washington ranks highest in the rate of child abuse per capita in the nation.

Together, these donors contributed more than one-and-a-half million dollars for Safe Shores’ “renovated” state-of-the-art facility located in Washington D.C., and were instrumental in ensuring Safe Shores’ ongoing efforts to provide hope and healing to children in crisis.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, as declared by Congress in 1983 and commemorated since its inception to honor and remember children who have suffered abuse, violence and maltreatment, and raise awareness about programs and services available nationwide to help reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Across the nation, local and national organizations will join together through candlelight vigils, tributes, proclamations and other initiatives designed to shine a spotlight on the issue of child abuse and neglect. Safe Shores will host a number of activities throughout the month of April to raise awareness about child abuse in the District of Columbia.

In anticipation of Child Abuse Prevention Month, Michele Booth Cole, Executive Director of Safe Shores, and Cheryl Ziegler Ragland, Esq., President of the Board of Directors, presented **Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton’s office** as well as **BB Otero, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services for**

Mayor Vincent Gray's office, Rick Moyers, Vice President of Programs and Communications from the Meyer Foundation; Rose Ann Cleveland, Executive Director of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Pinkie Dent-Mayfield from the Philip Graham Foundation and Michael Ryan from the Washington Children's Foundation with signature artwork to highlight their support of Safe Shores' new facility located in northwest Washington, D.C. The art was specifically provided by Fresh Artists and created by K-12 schoolchildren. Fresh Artists is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting civic engagement and arts education for children.

"Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia Government, and each of these dedicated donors have been instrumental in helping the DC Children's Advocacy Center expand our programs and services, providing the critical funds necessary for our organization to renovate and furnish our new facility and help us continue to provide critical services to local children," said Michele Booth Cole. "Today we recognize and thank them for their invaluable support and continuing commitment to Safe Shores and Washington, D.C.'s most vulnerable residents."

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton was instrumental in obtaining critical funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to assist with furniture, fixtures and other appointments throughout the new Safe Shores facility. Congresswoman Holmes Norton was unable to attend the ceremony, but sent Safe Shores a congratulatory letter stating:

"For many years, I have followed Safe Shores' journey and watched the organization grow to what we see today: a trusted and respected service provider with a staff of skilled and dedicated professionals who have helped create a welcoming, thoughtfully-planned facility where children's voices are heard." Congresswoman Holmes Norton's award was presented in absentia.

"The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation has long shared and supported Safe Shores' mission to provide coordinated, comprehensive, and compassionate services to local victims of child abuse. We are delighted to have made the first cornerstone grant toward the expansion efforts, ensuring that all DC children have access, in a world-class facility, to the high-quality services that Safe Shores offers," said Rose Ann Cleveland, Executive Director of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

Safe Shores coordinates the efforts of D.C.'s Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse allegations. In addition to Safe Shores, the MDT includes the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD); D.C. Child and Family Services (CFSA); Children's National Medical Center (CNMC); the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia (OAG); and The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia(USAO).

The unique newly renovated 40,000 square foot DC Children's Advocacy Center offers cutting-edge treatment and supportive services for child victims of sexual and physical abuse and witnesses to violence. Co-locating these services together under one roof provides a safe place and coordinated, compassionate response for children in crisis, minimizing stress and trauma during the ensuing investigation process.

At Safe Shores, trained experts conduct forensic interviews that may be used in legal proceedings, offer therapeutic interventions such as counseling and art therapy, and provide crisis intervention. The facility features a Kids' Café; Clothing Closet; Play Therapy Room; Tot Waiting Room; Forensic Interview Observation Room; Teen Waiting Room; Art Therapy Room; Medical Suite; and Training and Learning Center.

In 2010, Safe Shores served nearly 700 Washington, DC children, and has served more than 13,000 since its inception in 1995. "When a frightened child comes through our doors, we make sure he or she feels safe and that the child's voice is heard," said Cole. "Thanks to our generous donors, we are able to meet the needs of every child who is brought to us for help." Locally, approximately 3,400 children suffer physical or sexual abuse or neglect each year. Nationally, one out of four girls and one out of seven boys will be sexually abused before they turn eighteen.

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For additional information about Safe Shores or child abuse, visit www.safeshores.org. Also view Safe Shore's Facebook page and follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/safeshoresdc.

[The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation](#) is the largest private, independent, local Foundation focused exclusively on the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and is committed to improving the quality of life for local residents.

[The Meyer Foundation](#) supports organizations working to meet local community needs throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The Foundation invests in visionary nonprofit leaders working to improve the lives of low-income people, provides hope and opportunity for young people, builds community through the arts, and more.

[Philip L. Graham Fund](#), named in memory of Philip L. Graham, who was publisher of [The Washington Post](#) from 1946 to 1961 and president of [The Washington Post Company](#) from 1947 to 1963, works toward the betterment of the Washington DC metropolitan area and supports activities that foster improvements in the fields of journalism and communications.

[The Washington Children's Foundation](#) provides assistance to non-profit organizations and agencies that work with at-risk children in the District of Columbia.