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SNAPI, 25 YEARS OF SERVICE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Pride Board Stands United, Speaks Out Against Domestic Abuse

Las Vegas, NV, October 11, 2007: This year, the Southern Nevada Association of Pride (SNAPI) is celebrating the 25th anniversary of supporting the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. Over the years, the role of SNAPI, as well as the name, has changed and evolved. The initial role for SNAPI was to support the GLBT community, through education of the community as a whole, and to operate the annual Las Vegas Pride Festival. We have been successful in creating recognition of the needs of our community and putting a "face" to GLBT issues. In addition, we have become a major fund raiser, providing funds for many GLBT-supporting agencies. Two of those agencies SNAPI is most proud to support are Safe Nest (an agency providing safe harbor for those in need) and the Community Counseling Center (an agency providing behavioral health services in a safe environment).

With National Coming Out Day upon us, it is an opportune time to discuss the other most difficult issue facing us - domestic abuse within a GLBT relationship. Domestic abuse, both verbal and physical, is a cancer that eats away at our community, every bit as much as HIV, but receives little attention. Domestic abusers usually come from abusive childhoods and perpetuate the abuse on those closest to them. The abuse can take many forms, that of verbal abuse directly to the partner or through the spreading of malicious innuendo, stalking and creating a threatening environment, or through direct physical abuse. Since many GLBT persons have a limited support structure through their families, it has become even more important for friends to support domestic abuse victims and encourage the victims to seek assistance and end the cycle.

The SNAPI Board of Directors is currently in such a supporting position. One of its members has recently severed an abusive relationship that included being a victim of verbal abuse, threats and physical attacks. The SNAPI member is a gentle and supportive person by nature and fell prey to being victimized by an angry and controlling abuser. As with most victims of domestic violence, the SNAPI member rationalized the abuse and attacks as not being as bad as they obviously were. Intervention came at the

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hands of a head physician at a local urgent care facility. The SNAPI member came to urgent care with a fractured shoulder, the third "accident" treated by the urgent care facility. The physician urged the SNAPI member to either press charges or leave the relationship. The SNAPI member was placed on a "watch list" to ensure that if the SNAPI member sought treatment in another facility for an "accident," the issue would be referred to Metro. Based on this intervention, the SNAPI member confided in long-time friends regarding the abusive situation and the SNAPI member left the relationship with his health intact. The SNAPI Board is extremely grateful to the urgent care physician who may have saved the life of our dear friend.

Unfortunately, domestic abusers sometimes refuse to abandon their victims. The SNAPI member continues to be harassed, both personally and through SNAPI. The SNAPI Board of Directors will not allow one angry and vindictive person to undo the good work of so many dedicated volunteers and supportive community members. It is unfortunate when uninformed people weigh in on the subject and side with the abuser without knowing the background, but SNAPI will not be forced into abandoning its mission, supporting the community or supporting our member.

For those who have attended our meetings in the past, we have been forced to place limitations on community participation, namely preventing the recording of SNAPI meetings without prior approval. We have already become aware of our meeting statements being taken out of context and used against our SNAPI member (as referred to above) with prior sponsors, volunteers and the media. Pursuant to the Nevada Revised Statutes, SNAPI is allowed to restrict the recording of its meetings, as this constitutes the property of SNAPI. SNAPI, as always, encourages all community members to attend our monthly meetings, where all business is discussed before action is taken. In the last five years, many safeguards have been implemented to ensure the integrity of our members and the safety of funds entrusted to us. It is important for your SNAPI Board of Directors to have your participation and support as we support our own members.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Ernie Yuen, please call Ernie at (702) 290-3583 or e-mail at president@lasvegaspride.org. For more information about SNAPI or Las Vegas Pride, visit www.lasvegaspride.org.

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