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TRAINING TO PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES PROVEN EFFECTIVE; SUE PATERNO URGES BROAD ADOPTION NATIONWIDE

Funded by Sue Paterno, pilot program on PA State System of Higher Education campuses now ready to assist with prevention and awareness training

Harrisburg, PA – A new child sexual abuse prevention-training program aimed at helping to create a culture of prevention on college campuses is now available for colleges and universities nationwide after a successful two-year pilot program between Stop it Now! and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Deborah Donovan Rice, Project Director for the Circles of Safety for Higher Education, today presented the findings to the State System Board of Governors at their quarterly meeting. In attendance was Sue Paterno, who personally funded nearly the entire \$220,000 cost of the pilot program and who is urging college campuses nationwide to consider adopting the training.

“Every year, colleges and universities host children on their campuses in a variety of settings,” said Sue Paterno, who noted that April is recognized as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. “For many communities, college campuses are more than institutions for higher learning; they are woven into the fabric of their host communities. After learning about ‘nice guy offenders’ in a report written by former FBI profiler Jim Clemente, I was hopeful that a strong pilot program could be designed and implemented that would address a problem that experts estimate affects one in ten children before age eighteen.

“Clearly after today’s presentation to the Board of Governors, it was a solid investment with an invaluable return.”

In September 2012, Stop It Now! – a national organization preventing child sexual abuse since 1992 – entered into an agreement with the State System to pilot a first of its kind campus-wide, multidisciplinary team approach to the prevention of child sexual abuse. Called *Circles of Safety for Higher Education*, the program is grounded in proven education principals. This practical and customizable training provided the tools for the prevention of child sexual abuse and helped its 14 college campuses create a culture of prevention. Nearly 150 people from all 14 campuses as well as the administration leadership from the Dixon Center were trained throughout the Commonwealth on four campuses: the Dixon Center, Slippery Rock, Bloomsburg, and Cheyney Universities.

“The State System’s collaboration with us to create a pilot program was remarkable,” said Rice. “I cannot say enough about the leadership and sincere desire to make an impact that was



demonstrated through the advisory team and our liaisons at each university. With their help and direction, this training can now be implemented at a small private college or a large university or system. It is rare to have a pilot program fully underwritten by an individual. Sue Paterno had a vision and knew that a higher education setting could play a vital role.”

The program relied on a tiered approach that involved system leadership and 14 individual campus leadership teams that included faculty, students, summer camp directors, as well as representatives from residence life, athletics, student affairs, counseling offices, legal counsel, human resources, communication, health clinics, Greek life, women’s centers and internship placement.

The customized, two-day training program is designed to prepare a “Prevention Squad” to have the confidence and comfort to lead prevention and awareness efforts on their campus. The “Prevention Squad” is a multi-disciplinary team, guided by its own individual campus action plan and is empowered to implement what its members learn within their spheres of influence both on and off campus.

Renown Prevention Innovation Center at the University of New Hampshire provided the third-party evaluation for the pilot program. During her presentation to the Board of Governors, Rice cited several quality measures that were met through pre- and post surveys. “Over the two years, it has been a privilege working with Stop It Now! on this innovative project for the awareness and prevention of child sexual victimization for higher education,” said Jane Stapleton, Co-director of Prevention Innovations Research Center. “Our work is nationally and internationally recognized for our contributions to the prevention and awareness surrounding this issue. Circles of Safety for Higher Education has provided a forum for education and implementation to provide any college community the foundation for a culture of prevention”.

“This pilot program exceeded our expectations,” said Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr. Kathleen Howley. “The training and awareness model truly benefitted the university communities – from the students preparing for their work with children as part of their clinical rotations, internships, or student teaching assignments to the University staffs interacting with children who visit our universities for camps, conferences, and athletic events.”

Thousands of children who attend summer camps and other activities utilize campus facilities annually at the 14 State System schools and on the campuses of colleges and universities nationwide.

“The State System community is privileged to have played a role in what I hope will be the creation of a program that can benefit other campuses, not only across Pennsylvania, but across the country.”

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