



## **For Immediate Release**

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HARRISBURG, PA (April 7, 2008) -- Hundreds of Pennsylvania's finest gathered Saturday to give voice to a cause that often goes unheard -- prevention of child sexual abuse.

More than 300 guests joined former Pennsylvania First Lady Michele M. Ridge at the second Annual Vision of Hope Gala and Silent Auction at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey. The event was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape together with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

"As a mother of two, I am aware of how precious our children are. I know we need to take action to help our youngest victims realize their potential and prevent tragedy from occurring," said Ridge, who chairs the Vision of Hope Advisory Council. "I know we have to work on our children's behalf to provide solutions, and through Vision of Hope that dream is coming alive."

The Vision of Hope was launched in July 2005 with the mission to make the future brighter and safer for our children, and has since grown into a national child abuse prevention campaign.

Vision of Hope funds this year were raised through the dinner and silent auction, which included nearly 100 items donated by local businesses and individuals. Highlighting the auction was a one-year lease of a Saturn Sky Roadster donated by Sutliff Auto Group, Harrisburg, and several vacation and sports packages, spa trips and jewelry.

Event sponsors included: Mr. and Mrs. Louis J. Appell, Jr., The Hall Foundation, Highmark Blue Shield, Sutliff Auto Group, Blank Rome, LLP, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Commerce Bank, Elsie H. Hillman Foundation, Glatfelter Insurance Group, NHS Human Services, Robert and Angela Ortenzio Family Foundation and PNC Foundation.

Thanks to its supporters and advocates, Vision of Hope is now poised to begin directing funds to create multi-level responses that promote effective prevention, critical intervention and adult responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

Funds were awarded on Saturday to the Network of Victim Assistance in Bucks County. As the first Vision of Hope grant recipient, their gift will provide training to mandated reporters -- an essential component to sexual violence intervention and prevention.

The Vision of Hope Award also was presented Saturday to Dr. Mary M. Carrasco, director of A Child's Place at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. Carrasco has dedicated her 27-year career to preventing child abuse and neglect.

"Through Vision of Hope, it is our goal to raise support and enhance our collective efforts to end child sexual abuse by providing prevention resources at the local, state and national levels," said Delilah Rumburg, executive director of PCAR. "We have come a long way since launching the Vision of Hope campaign in 2005."

PCAR is the oldest and largest state anti-sexual violence coalition in the U.S. The organization represents 52 sexual assault centers that serve the state's 67 counties. Each year these centers provide confidential services, at no charge, to more than 9,000 child victims of sexual abuse.

Services to these children must continue as effects can last a lifetime and result in an increased likelihood of future problems that include substance abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide, depression and abuse of their own children.

"Our children deserve better," Rumburg told the crowd. "So I urge you to do your part to make sure every child knows that he or she is valued, unique, loved and cared for -- and help us build a fund that will give our children the tools that will give them hope, help and healing, and, as our greatest gift, the promise of a future that is filled with unlimited possibilities."

On the Web: <http://www.theirhope.org> or <http://www.pcar.org>

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**CUTLINE #1:**

Michele M. Ridge, former Pennsylvania First Lady and Advisory Committee Chair, offers remarks to a crowd of more than 300 guests at the second annual Vision of Hope Gala and Silent Auction on Saturday, sponsored by the

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

**CUTLINE #2:**

Attorney General Tom Corbett dances with his wife, Susan, at the second annual Vision of Hope Gala and Silent Auction on Saturday, April 5. Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, the event raises money for prevention of child sexual abuse.