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For Immediate Release

DA Marks the Start of Domestic Violence Awareness Month with “Community of Hope” Event

_Candlelight Ceremony Honored Victims of Domestic Violence_

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a time for reflection on all that has been accomplished to prevent violence and abuse in our communities, and all that must still be done. Today, the District Attorney’s Office joined the San Diego Domestic Violence Council (SDDVC), county officials and other social service agencies together as a “Community of Hope” to provide resources, education, prevention and awareness of domestic violence to professionals and community members. The event is the first of many to raise awareness throughout the month of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

San Diego County has averaged 17,000 domestic violence incidents annually for the past 10 years from 2008 through 2018. In 2018, there were 17,513 domestic violence incidents reported to law enforcement in San Diego County, there were also 15 domestic violence homicide victims of which the suspect was a current or former intimate partner. There were an additional three homicide victims (e.g. family members, new boyfriend, bystander) that died during these domestic violence incidents and five offenders died by suicide. Last year, 2,643 defendants were charged for domestic violence crimes by the DA’s Office.

“Domestic violence not only harms the direct victim but also has a devastating ripple effect on children, families and communities. This is why we must fight it together as a community united to break the cycle of violence,” said District Attorney Summer Stephan. “We are committed to collaborating with partners from a variety of fields to bring accountability through prosecution and bring hope through early prevention and intervention.”

Throughout this past year, the San Diego County DA’s Office served the SDDVC by coordinating training for hundreds of professionals in our county on domestic violence as well as other family violence topics such as mandated reporting, being trauma-informed and risk assessment.
Together, we are helping to bring light to this issue and let those experiencing abuse know they are not alone,” said SDDVC President Jessica Yaffa. “There are so many resources in our county to help them. We want them to know, there is hope, if they reach out.”

At the event, a candlelight vigil ceremony was held to honor every victim of domestic violence homicide in 2018. Survivors of domestic violence also shared their stories.

“Many people in San Diego County encounter domestic violence on a daily basis - the best thing a person can do when they see domestic violence is say something,” said Kelsey Hamlett, who is a survivor of domestic violence. “Too many people have been taken by domestic violence. If we all band together to stand up to domestic violence San Diego County can save lives.”

San Diego County Supervisor Greg Cox presented the Live Well San Diego proclamation to the SDDVC during the event, which also included a resource fair for services to help survivors of domestic violence. Also at the event, Deputy District Attorney Claudia Grasso was named President for the San Diego Domestic Violence Council. Grasso is the Assistant Chief of the DA’s Family Protection Division. The SDDVC is a collaboration of a multitude of organizations and community members seeking to reduce and prevent domestic violence in our county, including County of San Diego’s Health and Human Services Agency, the DA’s Office, the City Attorney’s Office, the Sheriff’s Department, and other law enforcement and social services agencies.

If you or someone you know is being abused by a current or former partner, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) for confidential support and assistance planning for safety.

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office**
The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.