

Feel Safe Again, Inc.

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"Be Strong, Be Safe, and Be Heard!"<sup>SM</sup>

## JANUARY IS NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

**For Immediate Release**

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**Everett, MA** - Feel Safe Again, Inc., a statewide non-profit organization for victims of stalking would like to use this month as an opportunity to educate the public about the pervasive crime which, a recent study finds, now affects nearly 3.4 million Americans a year.

"Once again, we would like to ask the community to join us in recognizing National Stalking Awareness Month," said Cheryl Darisse, founder and president. The organization was established in memory of Darisse's sister, Sandra Berfield, who was stalked for over two years, before being killed on January 20, 2000, by a package-bomb her stalker hand-delivered to her Everett, Massachusetts home.

"A major national study on stalking, released on January 13, 2009, by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), serves as a wake-up call about a serious and often misunderstood crime," says the National Center for Victims of Crime, the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and founder of the Stalking Resource Center.

*Stalking Victimization in the United States*, the largest collection of data on stalking prevalence and behavior to date, found that 3.4 million persons identified themselves as victims of stalking in a 12-month period. This figure, which represents an increase of 2 million victims per year over the findings of a key 1998 study, suggests the urgent need for a more comprehensive response to the crime.

Stalking is typically defined as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. It is a criminal offense under the laws of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 12 women and one in 45 men will be stalked in their lifetime, for an average duration of almost two years.

"We have launched our annual "End This Silent Fear" campaign in conjunction with the Stalking Resource Center's educational campaign, "Stalking: Know It, Name It, Stop It.", in order to educate the public about this serious crime of fear. It is extremely important that we raise awareness, as well as much-needed funds to help other victims become survivors," said Darisse.

Local police departments are encouraged to request free safety kits and brochures. For additional information or to schedule a free safety training, please call (888) 99B-SAFE or e-mail [info@feelsafeagain.org](mailto:info@feelsafeagain.org).

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