YAHOO! NEWS

October 19, 2011

Members of Congress Acknowledge Unique Impact of Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence, Encourage Legislative Action

Congressional briefing from Makers of Memories Foundation draws attention to more than 43 million Americans living with impacts of childhood exposure to abuse.

NEW YORK, Oct. 19, 2011-- The first ever Congressional Briefing on the damaging effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence compelled three members of Congress this week to take on the intractable problem and bring more awareness to the issue.

The Makers of Memories Foundation, in partnership with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Johnson Products, presented research at the October briefing that links childhood exposure to domestic violence with long-term deficits. More than 80% of boys and 77% of girls who experience domestic violence as children go on to repeat it as adults, studies show. These individuals are six times more likely to commit suicide, 50 times more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol and ultimately perpetuate the cycle of violence that leads to an untold loss of human potential. More than 90% of prisoners in the U.S. experienced domestic violence as children.

At the briefing, Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI), John Conyers (D-MI) and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), recognized the specific impacts of childhood exposure to abuse and pledged to incorporate the issue in their legislative agendas. Rep. Conyers suggested the need for a Special Session of the House Judiciary Committee to address childhood exposure. All three Members of Congress thanked Makers of Memories for raising awareness about the unaddressed issue.

The Makers of Memories Foundation is the only organization focused on the children impacted by domestic violence and adults who experienced it as children. Described by UNICEF as "one of the most damaging, unaddressed human rights violations in the world today," domestic violence impacts 3 million children in the U.S. and 275 million children worldwide each year. There are 40 million American adults who experienced domestic violence in childhood and still live with the damaging effects.

"The cycle of violence can never stop unless we focus on the children," said Brian F. Martin, Founder and Chairman of the Makers of Memories Foundation. "New research proves exposure to violence alters children's nervous systems and brain chemistry. It literally changes who they are as well as their self-concept. From this day forward, this problem can no longer go unaddressed."