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News

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
OFFICE TO COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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New York Breaks the Silence Together

New York Women's Agenda Kicks-off Corporate Education Campaign During Women's History Month

NEW YORK, N.Y. (March 11, 2004) -- Domestic violence costs American Business leaders over 3 billion dollars each year. It can have harmful effects on employee productivity and morale and is the leading cause of injury against women. To increase awareness of this issue and as part of Women's History Month, New York Women's Agenda, Altria Group, Inc. and the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence have joined together to organize the *New York Breaks the Silence Together Corporate* initiative.

To kick-off the initiative, a corporate breakfast will be held on March 30, 2004 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, above Grand Central Station in Manhattan. The goal of the event is to introduce tools and resources to New York business leaders and encourage them to implement policies that are supportive of employees that may be victims of partner violence.

"The experience of domestic violence does not leave a victim when he or she enters the workplace. The trauma of a battering incident, which occurred at home, may impact work performance and attendance records," said Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez of the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. "Knowledgeable employers and employees can ensure workplace security and safety for victims. This administration is committed to protecting the rights of domestic violence victims in every setting."

As part of the education process, employers will learn how these policies can improve business practices by lowering occurrences of employee lateness and stress that may be caused by anxiety and tension at home. By creating a safe environment for employees, managers can increase morale, self-confidence, and drive, resulting in higher levels of efficiency.

"While domestic violence has decreased in New York City, there were still 64 family related homicides and 600 police responses to domestic violence incidents each day in 2003. Those statistics are too alarming to ignore," says NYWA President Gina Bolden-Rivera. "We have a unique opportunity to help bring a historically hidden problem out into the open to demystify it for employers."

"At Altria Group, we recognize that the horrible crime of domestic violence knows no boundaries and extends from the

home to the workplace," says Jennifer Goodale, Vice President of Contributions at Altria Group, Inc. "In addition to supporting organizations nationwide that are strengthening the safety net available to victims and survivors of domestic violence, Altria is committed to raising awareness about this important issue in the workplace and assisting corporations -- big and small -- to create policies that help and empower victims. "

NYWA can provide assistance, simple tools and resources to help employers develop policies on behalf of employees with regard to domestic violence. Sample policies that have been tested and used by companies such as American Express, Lifetime Television and Liz Claiborne, can be used as templates to be efficiently integrated into corporate safety policies and employee handbooks. The breakfast will also highlight participating corporate executives and their companies.

"Once people are aware of how large this epidemic is in New York, we can provide guidance for creating an environment where it can be addressed," adds Bolden-Rivera.

About the New York Women's Agenda

The New York Women's Agenda is a non-profit, nonpartisan coalition of over 100 women's organizations that are passionate about the obligation to speak out and influence policy and programs that affect the lives of women and families in New York City. Members represent the diversity of the city and include community groups; religious, ethnic, and political groups; professional associations; and issues-based groups. Through NYWA, these groups unite to work on issues of common interest and to advocate for public policy. Together, the voices of NYWA members work in concert to become one rousing chorus, impossible to ignore. Visit NYWA at www.NYWA.org.

About the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence formulates policies and programs relating to all aspects of domestic violence, raises public awareness, and coordinates direct service provision among city agencies and local community based organizations. For help please call New York City's multi-lingual, 24-hour domestic violence hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE (4673) or 311 and ask for the "Domestic Violence Hotline."

About Altria Group

Altria Group, Inc. the parent company of Kraft Foods, Philip Morris International, and Philip Morris USA, is committed to supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence and their advocates in working toward a world free of violence. At Altria, our domestic violence prevention grant making is conducted through the Altria Doors of Hope Program, a grant making initiative of Altria Group and The National Network to End Domestic Violence Fund. This initiative supports programs that provide a continuum of core services to victims of domestic violence such as food and meals; shelter, counseling; legal and advocacy services as well as transportation needs. Support is also designated for public awareness campaigns. For more information about the Altria family of companies' programs and partnerships visit www.altria.com/media_programs.