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MAYOR BLOOMBERG, QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY BROWN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF NEW YORK CITY'S SECOND FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

One-Stop Service Center Will Provide Assistance to Queens' Domestic Violence Victims and their Children

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today opened New York City's second Family Justice Center in Kew Gardens, Queens. The new Center, like its Brooklyn counterpart, will provide a multitude of services for victims of domestic violence and their children, bringing together dedicated domestic violence prosecutors, civil attorneys, and social service providers all under one roof. Today, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded the City \$1.1 million to support the work of the New York City Family Justice Center in Queens. The Family Justice Center Initiative is part of the Bloomberg Administration's overall effort to reduce domestic violence and provide comprehensive services to victims. As a result of the City's focus on this issue, family related crimes have declined by 21% and intimate partner homicides have declined by 51% citywide over the last six years. Joining the Mayor at the opening were Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown, Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall, Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Carol A. Robles-Roman, Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez, Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, Mayor's Criminal Justice Coordinator John Feinblatt, Director of the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women Cindy Dyer, Los Angeles Dodgers Manager and Safe at Home Foundation founder and chairman Joe Torre, and Jaslene Gonzalez, a domestic violence survivor and a winner of 'America's Next Top Model'.

"Our City has made investigating, prosecuting and preventing all domestic violence crimes a top priority," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Domestic violence creates financial, emotional and at times, physical scars. By making it as easy as possible for victims and their families to access services, many New Yorkers are given the opportunity to start over again."

"The Family Justice Center is an alliance of government agencies and nonprofits with corporate sponsorship to promote the best practices and assist domestic violence victims," said OCDV Commissioner Jimenez. "These partnerships allow us to evaluate clients' needs and effectively deliver services to all domestic violence victims, including children."

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The new Family Justice Center will streamline the process for domestic violence victims in Queens, ultimately encouraging them to seek and receive the help they need. The City's first Center located in downtown Brooklyn has exceeded all expectations since it opened in 2005. It has served over 11,000 clients to date and averages 1,000 client visits per month. Due to the extensive array of services available at the Brooklyn Center, each client, on average, utilizes the services there for nearly six months. One of the most unique aspects of these Centers is the provision of legal services by immigration attorneys who can assist with applying for visas and family law attorneys who can assist with child support and custody proceedings. At the Brooklyn Center nearly half of the clients have received civil legal assistance. Since the Center opened, domestic violence related crimes in Brooklyn have decreased by 8% and family related homicides have decreased by 16%, under the combined efforts of the New York City Police Department. Based on this success, Mayor Bloomberg committed to opening additional Centers. Following the opening in Queens, a Bronx Center is expected to open by the end of 2009.

"The opening today of the New York City Family Justice Center is an important step in helping to break the cycle of violence that affects so many families across our county," said Queens District Attorney Brown. "Through our partnership with Mayor Bloomberg and the on-site service providers, I am confident that the Center will significantly enhance the quality of justice that domestic violence victims have been receiving here in Queens."

"The Family Justice Center Initiative creates community solutions to a global problem," said Deputy Mayor Robles-Roman. "This initiative gives domestic violence victims access to vital services while bringing together the community."

"Responding to the complex and immediate needs of victims in the community is an important and vital part of the healing process," said Director Dyer. "The co-location of services, like those in the Queens Family Justice Center, makes a victim's search for help and justice more efficient by bringing together professionals who provide an array of services under one roof."

The Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation has been one of the City's key partners in the Family Justice Centers. The foundation has funded the children's room named 'Margaret's Place' and the parent and children's counseling program located in both at the Brooklyn Center and now in Queens. The Foundation was created to help end the cycle of abuse at home. More than 3,000 children who have come to the Brooklyn Center and visited Margaret's Place have had the opportunity to talk with trained staff about what they have experienced. In addition, since November 2006, 33% of the children who have been assessed have begun one-on-one and/or group counseling.

"I am honored to join Mayor Bloomberg today in opening the Queens Family Justice Center," said Joe Torre. "The Center will provide children and families who are exposed to domestic violence with the services they need in a safe environment. The Safe At Home Foundation is proud to help bring the Center and its resources to Queens. Working together, we can protect our children, save lives, and help end the cycle of domestic violence."

In addition to the children's room 'Margaret's Place' and the parent and children's counseling program, services available for victims at the Center will include safety planning; civil

legal information; assistance with filing police and probation reports; counseling and support groups; prosecution of domestic violence crimes; services for the elderly and/or disabled; assistance with accessing emergency shelter and housing; job training, resume assistance, and English as a Second Language classes and language interpretation.

All of these services will be provided by the following on-site partners: Barrier Free Living, The City University of New York, Department for the Aging, Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, Department of Probation, Human Resources Administration, inMotion, Inc., Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, Korean American Family Services Center, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program, New York Asian Women's Center, New York City Police Department, Queens County District Attorney's Office, Queens Legal Services, Safe Horizon, Sanctuary for Families, and the Urban Justice Center. Off-site partners of the Center include: Health and Hospitals Corporation, New York City Housing Authority, and the Queens Borough President's Office.

"I am proud to join the Mayor at the opening of this much needed facility," said Queens Borough President Marshall. "By providing multiple services under one location, we will reduce the burdens that victims face when seeking justice. No longer will victims need to repeat their difficult story and travel from one to another to find services they need."

The \$5 million New York City Family Justice Center in Queens, like the Brooklyn Center, is a private-public partnership with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization established to promote partnerships between the City and the private sector. The Queens Center is supported by a diverse group of companies, foundations, and citizens which includes: Altria Group, Inc., Avon Foundation, Cisco Systems, Inc., City Council, Dell, Inc., Hewlett-Packard Company, IBM Corporation, Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation, The Michael Bolton Charities, Inc., Network Appliance, Inc., Queens Borough President, United Way, Inc., Verizon Wireless, WebHouse, Inc., and WOR Radio/Dr. Joy to the World Foundation. For the past two years, the annual benefit of the Mayor's Fund, Fete de Swifty, has also raised significant support for the development and operation of the Brooklyn and Queens Centers, and proceeds from this fall's event will help fund the next Bronx Center. Members of the benefit committee were present at today's announcement to celebrate the opening.

The Queens Center will be open to the public on Monday, July 21, 2008. If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, help is available 24-hours-a-day in all languages by calling 911, 311, or the New York City Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE (4673).

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