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## GOVERNOR JACK MARKELL TO DEDICATE FEBRUARY TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

**Wilmington, Del.** – On February 5<sup>th</sup>, Governor Markell will sign a proclamation declaring February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month (TDVAPM). Each February, President Obama and Delaware’s Governor declare this special month to bring awareness to this issue and educate young people on the signs of teen dating violence. The proclamation will hear remarks from Lucy O’Donnell (DAPI), Sue Ryan (DCADV Executive Director) and Eleanor Torres (DVCC Executive Director).

**1 in 3 teens in the U.S.** is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, according to Futures with Violence. And since LoveisRespect.org notes that violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18, awareness of this issue is imperative. In Delaware, the 2013 YRBS survey found that 8.9% of high school students have experienced physical dating violence. Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. Many teens do not report dating violence out of embarrassment, fear and lack of education of the signs. This makes TDVAPM an especially important month for Delawareans in which teens and their families can learn about this prevalent concern.

“Teen dating violence is a problematic issue that requires dissemination of information as well as collaboration with teens statewide. When girls and young women are among the highest rated for intimate partner violence, devoting an entire month to increasing awareness is more than necessary. When the community focuses on healthy relationship building, our young members have a solid foundation in which to stand,” says Sue Ryan, Executive Director of the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

“Every person has the right to healthy, respectful and safe relationships. Whether it’s physical, emotional or verbal abuse, we must continue working to ensure our youth are educated on how to protect themselves and have the opportunity to enjoy relationships free of abuse,” Governor Jack Markell also noted.

In addition to this event and many others held throughout the state, there will be a High School Instagram contest inviting students throughout Delaware to contribute their voice on social media. Participants will take a picture of one of four qualities found in a healthy relationship - *Communication, Trust, Equality, or Acceptance*; write a description of their photo and the quality they chose; and post on Instagram using #RelationshipRespect2016. The top 3 entries will win a monetary prize and help circulate positive, healthy relationship messages throughout their networks.

February 9, 2016 is Wear Orange Day, a national day of awareness to commemorate Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month and promoting healthy relationships. The hashtag #Orange4Love and #TeenDVMonth can be used for sharing and updating messages. Attendees of the proclamation are encouraged to wear orange on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

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