



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 1, 2008**

### **HelpLine Emphasizes Child Safety at Annual Meeting**

Delaware, OH – HelpLine of Delaware and Morrow Counties, Inc. (HelpLine) held its 36th annual meeting on Thursday, September 25 at the Cardinal Center in Morrow County.

Executive Director Susan Hanson kicked off the breakfast meeting by inviting attendees to stroll down memory lane to relive the innocence of their youth. In the next moment, Hanson challenged audience members to return this same gift of a carefree existence to a child in today's context.

Affirming Hanson's sentiments, Julianna Nemeth, HelpLine Prevention Director, introduced Stewards of Children (SOC) – a revolutionary program teaches adults how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. To date, HelpLine has trained nearly 170 adults throughout Delaware and Morrow Counties in SOC and anticipates cultivating a new crop of proactive adults who are willing to stand for and protect children.

The Gilead Christian High School choir, under the direction of Jenny Ebert, rendered three songs and provided a fitting reminder of the obligation to the future generation.

Patricia Lyons of Prevent Child Abuse Ohio (PCAO), a statewide organization that prevents the abuse and neglect of Ohio's children, delivered the keynote address which challenged and empowered audience members to take an active role in protecting children from the risk of abuse.

As the primary prevention program for The Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, PCAO uses a wholistic approach to addressing root issues. And, often times Lyons believes that it's a lack of guidance and intervention that leads to child maltreatment.

"I never heard a parent say 'I'm going to wake up today and abuse my child', said Lyons.

"Many times, parents who end up abusing their children don't have the information and resources that help them understand and communicate with their child."

Lyons also pointed out the unfortunate paradox of community organizations that require an overwhelming litany of qualifying risk factors that discourage many from seeking help.

According to PCAO, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday, less than one in 10 will tell. Lyons described this epidemic as an avoidable epidemic which she hopes to be able to stop – even in the face of displacement.

"We are in a business where we are trying to work ourselves out of a job," said Lyons.

Also during the meeting, Hanson presented **John Radabaugh**, Detective Sergeant with the Delaware Police Department and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner at Grady Memorial Hospital, **Heather Crosbie**, with the 2008 **Katherine Gharrity Community Service Award**. Co-chairs of the Delaware County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) — a multi-disciplinary team of community allies who work to coordinate trauma services, respond to survivors and prevent future victimization. Radabaugh and Crosbie received the award for work on SART and with HelpLine to ensure a victim-centered approach to service delivery and care. Posthumously recognized for the same award was **Bonnie Rogers** a former Counselor at Delaware Area Career Center who recently lost her battle with cancer at age 66. A long-time member of the Delaware County SART, Rogers advocated for schools to be part of the county sexual assault protocol and was active in the most current protocol revisions.

**Katherine Gharrity** received special recognition for her role in founding HelpLine and **Jennifer Tewell**, Event Services Consultant with Occasions by Jennifer, was the recipient of the **Volunteer of the Year** honor for her work with the Sexual Assault Response Network. A native of Vermilion, Ohio and current student at Franklin University, Tewell helped secure first-time grant funding for the annual sexual assault survivor's retreat.

The event culminated with a business meeting where Board member Don Lockwood was elected as Chair of the Board of Directors at HelpLine.

For more information about HelpLine call 211 or visit us online at [www.helplinedelmor.org](http://www.helplinedelmor.org).

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### **About the Katherine Gharrity Community Service Award**

The Katherine Gharrity Community Service Award is presented annually to an individual who provides outstanding community service to the Delaware and Morrow County communities. The award was renamed in 2008 to honor the impetus and vision of Katherine Gharrity and her contribution to the Delaware community when co-founding HelpLine, formerly Help Anonymous, as a group to support unwed, pregnant women. Gharrity is a tireless advocate who embodies the tenants of excellence, leadership and empowerment for women and those in need. To ensure Gharrity's legacy remains a significant part of history, HelpLine commits to using Gharrity as a model as she continues to inspire others to service.

### **About HelpLine**

HelpLine of Delaware and Morrow Counties, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization that provides a 24-hour crisis support hotline, information and referral to direct services and advocacy, and serves as the area's only volunteer center. Committed to empowering people through knowledge, support and resources, HelpLine facilitates the stability and self-sufficiency of the emotional and financial needs of the Delaware and Morrow County communities. HelpLine is a contract provider of the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health & Recovery Services Board and partially funded by the Council for Older Adults. A United Way Agency, HelpLine is accredited by the American Association of Suicidology, National Alliance of Information & Referral Systems and certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health. For more information, please visit: [www.HelpLinedelmor.org](http://www.HelpLinedelmor.org).

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