“Handbags for Hope” Helps Texas Domestic Violence Victims
Calls for Help Increase 240% in 2008

AUSTIN, TX, March 3, 2009 – One Austin area shelter reported crisis walk-ins jumped 240% over the past year, according to an Allstate Foundation survey. Three out of four area shelters surveyed say they have seen a dramatic rise in hotline calls and families coming to the shelters for help.

On Wednesday, Texas Advocacy Project and The Allstate Foundation were joined by Texas State Representative Patrick Rose and Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton to launch the Austin area’s Handbags for Hope campaign – asking Austin area residents to donate new or gently used handbags as part of a unique campaign aimed at placing vital information in the hands of victims.

Children from the Hays-Caldwell Women’s Center will select a donated bag to gift to their moms on Mother’s Day. A chance for a new life will be tucked away inside the handbags - each one will be fitted with a tag providing Texas Advocacy Project's life-saving, toll-free domestic violence hotline number and a pamphlet detailing steps to develop a safety plan.

Last year, nearly 2,000 purses were collected through Handbags for Hope drives in Austin and Amarillo. This is the second year for the campaign that uses local Allstate Insurance Company agencies as drop-off locations for people wanting to make donations.

Community members can hand-off handbags at any Austin or San Marcos area Allstate Exclusive Agency from now through Wednesday, March 11. To find your nearest Allstate Exclusive Agency to donate a handbag, visit Allstate.com and click on the “Find an Agent” tab at the top of the page. The 2009 effort is also collecting handbags in the Rio Grande Valley, where a local launch took place February 24.

“The Allstate Foundation and Texas Advocacy Project are taking a stand against domestic violence,” said Janemarie Clark, Texas manager for The Allstate Foundation. “This campaign is an extension of the Allstate Good Hands Promise to help all members of society feel better protected today and better prepared for the future. Together, we are empowering survivors with the opportunity to obtain personal independence.”
NEWS

For victims striving to become survivors, an attempt to seek help can be a life threatening effort. By stitching the Project’s domestic violence hotline number inside the handbags, victims will be armed with one of the strongest tools to break the cycle of domestic violence – access to legal aid.

“We are in the business of providing safety, peace of mind and security,” said Heath Riddles, the Project’s deputy executive director. “This campaign will provide victims with a link to life-saving legal aid they may not otherwise be able to search for in their home environment.”

Find Help
If you or someone you know needs help, you can call the Project’s Family Violence Legal Hotline (800) 374-HOPE. You can also contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE to locate a program in your community that can help with emergency assistance funds, shelter, utility and rent assistance, public benefits and affordable housing.

Project Particulars
Texas Advocacy Project is a statewide non-profit organization providing free legal solutions to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The Project provides invaluable legal services to people trying to escape the dangerous daily dilemma of domestic violence – helping thousands of Texans and their children across the state. For more about their programs and ways to support their mission please visit their website at TexasAdvocacyProject.org.

Allstate Foundation Facts
Established in 1952, The Allstate Foundation is an independent, charitable organization made possible by subsidiaries of The Allstate Corporation. The Allstate Foundation partners with non-profit organizations on community initiatives that promote “safe and vital communities,” “tolerance, inclusion, and diversity” and “economic empowerment.” Teen driving and empowering victims of domestic violence have been priorities for the Foundation since 2005.

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