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## **Domestic Violence Coalition Launches Partnership with Miss Louisiana USA**

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana** – Miss Louisiana USA, Candice Bennett, has chosen domestic violence as her signature cause during her reign. With a compelling personal history of having overcome a violent relationship, Bennett looks forward to sharing her experience and message of hope with others. She has chosen to partner with Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence to serve as a celebrity ambassador for the cause.

“We are thrilled to partner with Ms. Bennett to increase awareness of domestic violence across the state and advocate for meaningful change,” said Beth Meeks, executive director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “Ms. Bennett’s dedication to ending domestic violence is impressive, and this partnership will help bring domestic violence issues to the forefront of the statewide conversation.”

Domestic violence remains a serious problem, with Louisiana consistently leading the nation in domestic homicides. The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence tracks these homicides and says from 2010 through 2012 there were 178 deaths due to domestic violence. 74% of these were committed with firearms and 37% of the offenders had a prior history of domestic violence or other violent crimes. The murder rate of women in Louisiana has been as much as twice the national average in recent years.

It is statistics like these that the coalition hopes to change. On April 28<sup>th</sup>, Bennett will join domestic violence and sexual assault advocates from across the state at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Day at the Capitol, hosted by Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault. This event will include display tables in the Rotunda of the Louisiana State Capitol building from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and a presentation on the Capitol Steps will begin at 9:00 a.m. Advocates and supporters will speak with legislators throughout the day to discuss domestic and sexual violence in Louisiana and how legislation can affect programs, advocates, and survivors.

On the evening of April 27<sup>th</sup>, the coalitions will host the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Purple and Teal Reception to honor allies in the movement to end domestic violence and sexual assault. Miss Louisiana USA will also be present at the reception to share her personal story of hope and resilience in the aftermath of abuse. Several legislators and service providers will also be honored for their efforts in recent years. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.lcadv.org](http://www.lcadv.org).

“Our Day at the Capitol events provide a great opportunity for ordinary citizens to make a difference by participating in meaningful advocacy with their elected officials,” said Meeks. “We are pleased to have Miss Louisiana USA Candice Bennett join us for Day at the Capitol and the Purple and Teal Reception, and we look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.”

More information on Day at the Capitol events can be found at [www.lcadv.org](http://www.lcadv.org).

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*The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) is a state wide network of battered women’s programs, other organizations and individuals who share the goal of ending violence against women and children in Louisiana. LCADV empowers its members through advocacy, education, resource development and technical assistance.*