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Women with Disabilities, Survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Aided through Funds by the U.S. Department of Justice

(Advocacy, Abuse, Women, Disability, Health)

October 5, 2010 (Cookeville, Tennessee)- Community Options, Inc. a national nonprofit organization that has been developing homes and employment for people with disabilities since 1989, recently became funded by the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women to educate and advocate for women with disabilities who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

NAVAS (Never a Victim, Always a Survivor) will begin working immediately to outreach to state-run institutions and facilities to start the education process about the program and all that it will offer. In partnership with The Genesis House, Community Options will also work to reexamine policies and procedures that will benefit women with disabilities, provide appropriate services and referrals and collaborate and create risk-reduction training and educational outreach to women with disabilities.

The grant will primarily be carried out in Cookeville, Tennessee and will work closely with The Clover Bottom Developmental Center, an 87-year old facility that was originally established to house “feeble-minded persons.”

As many as 83% of women with disabilities are survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault according to the National Crime Victimization Survey. People with disabilities were victims of 47,000 rapes in 2006 and the rate of violent crime against people with disabilities was 1.5 times higher than for those without disabilities. People with disabilities are more than two times more likely to be sexually assaulted and women with a cognitive disability were more likely to be victimized than women with other types of disabilities.

NAVAS can provide personnel training, technical assistance, advocacy, interventions, educational presentations, referrals, support groups and assistance with strategic planning.

“Being awarded this grant to assist women with disabilities who are survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault is vital to our work as we continue to emancipate women with disabilities from institutions,” says Robert Stack, President and CEO of Community Options. “At the alarming rates that violence occurs against women with disabilities only proves how the work of this grant will transform the lives of so many women.”

For more information about NAVAS, please contact Robin Gray, Executive Director of Community Options of Cookeville at 931-372-0955 or robin.gray@comop.org.

For more information about Community Options, please visit them at www.comop.org or www.comop.org/conference. Follow the organization on Facebook, or follow them on Twitter at COINATIONAL.

