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Students Against Violence Everywhere Reveals Five Distinguished Award Winners

National Nonprofit Names Students, Advisor, Chapter and Volunteer of the Year Following Annual Summit to Prevent Violence in U.S. Schools

Raleigh, North Carolina – March 16, 2016 – The National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere is recognizing standout individuals for their efforts and leadership in preventing violence in schools and communities nationwide. As part of the organization's annual Summit, SAVE honored two Students of the Year and one of each of the following: Advisor of the Year, Chapter of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. Award winners were nominated by community members from across the country.

SAVE's Student of the Year awards went to:

- Haley Abernathy from the Highland School of Technology in Gastonia, North Carolina: Abernathy has been a dedicated member of SAVE's National Youth Advisory Board for three years, serving as president for the past two. She continually demonstrates unwavering commitment to SAVE's mission not only as a member of the Board, but in her own school's chapter as well. Abernathy has led safety activities with local elementary students promoting positive character traits and bullying prevention, spearheaded planning for teen safe driving events at her high school and coordinated various other chapter service projects.
- Belinda Benjamin from Lockhart Elementary School in the U.S. Virgin Islands: Benjamin actively participates in all anti-violence and peace rallies in addition to being a role model for other students, despite being one of the youngest members of her chapter. She is known as a peacemaker among other students and speaks freely about how it feels when people name call, push others off playground equipment or challenge each other to fights. Benjamin has also helped encourage more students to join SAVE through her efforts.

The Chapter of the Year award went to community-based SAVE chapter, Optimism Preventive Services from Georgetown, South Carolina. The chapter overcame many obstacles this year, including being flooded out of their meeting location. Nonetheless, the group of 32 students remained extremely active in their community. Projects include hosting a community wide anti-bullying rally, organizing a clothing and personal items drive for the Family Justice Women's Shelter, hosting their annual crime prevention program, conducting a teen dating violence workshop for area youth, and promoting kindness and positive choices to kids at elementary schools, daycares and the local library.

The SAVE Advisor of the Year award went to Sarah Dianich from Mukwonago High School in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. Dianich works with her student members to coordinate outreach and violence prevention activities at the area elementary and middle schools. Some of her most recent accomplishments include coordinating a Penny War fundraiser that earned \$2,000 for the local women's shelter and organizing a winter coat drive for families in need. Through her efforts, she has also helped create two new SAVE chapters at other schools in her community.

The final award, Volunteer of the Year, went to Thomas Walters who was honored for his ongoing support of SAVE. As the owner of three Allstate Insurance Agency offices located in the Raleigh area of North Carolina, Walters has served on SAVE's Board of Directors for six years, secured several community grants for the nonprofit and regularly donates items for the annual Summit. He also speaks at many local school events promoting teen safe driving and overall youth engagement. The Allstate Foundation and SAVE joined forces in 2005 to further engage, empower, encourage and educate students, and Walters has been a driving force in bringing that partnership to life locally.

“All of these award winners, both individually and collectively, represent the driving principles of Students Against Violence Everywhere,” said Carleen Wray, executive director of SAVE. “Their dedicated efforts exemplify outstanding personal character, community pride and a passion for keeping students across our country safe. We’re thrilled to honor Haley, Belinda, Sarah, Thomas and the Optimism Preventive Services chapter. We are so grateful for each of their commitments to furthering SAVE’s mission.”

The winners were announced at the National SAVE Youth Summit, which was held March 12 in Raleigh. More than 300 people attended, including SAVE participants, students, teachers, law enforcement, dropout prevention coordinators, social workers, counselors and parents from around the country. Through motivating workshops, peer-to-peer presentations and nationally acclaimed speakers, the Summit showcased successful practices in preventing violence and trained participants in effective ways to make their schools and communities safer. For more information or to help make a difference in our schools, please visit www.nationalsave.org.

About the National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere:

SAVE started at West Charlotte High School in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1989 following the tragic death of a student who was trying to break up a fight at an off-campus party. Students met first to console each other, then as an organization to promote youth safety and to work together to prevent future incidents from occurring. SAVE provides education about the effects and consequences of violence and helps provide safe activities for students, parents and communities. For more information on SAVE or starting a SAVE chapter, visit www.nationalsave.org, or contact SAVE at (866) 343-SAVE to receive free startup materials and guidance.

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