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The Conference on Crimes Against Women announces recipient of inaugural IGNITE Award

The Star Tribune's *Denied Justice* team honored for bringing injustice out of the darkness
and lighting the fire of change

DALLAS (MARCH 29, 2019) – In the past year, issues of violence against women have begun reaching the national stage like never before. In acknowledgment of varied courageous efforts that are sparking awareness and action across the country, the [Conference on Crimes Against Women](#) created the [IGNITE Award](#). In this inaugural award year, the Star Tribune's [Denied Justice](#) team will be spotlighted for their particularly impressive work in bringing injustice out of the darkness and igniting the fire of change not only in their community, but across the nation. The IGNITE Award will be presented at the opening plenary of the 2019 Conference on Crimes Against Women on Monday, April 8 at 8:00 a.m.

Denied Justice is a nine-part investigative series, beginning with a special section on July 22 and continuing through the final installment on December 30, 2018. The Star Tribune examined more than 1,400 rape and sexual assault case files from the 20 law enforcement agencies across Minnesota that reported the highest number of sexual assault reports to the FBI. A reporter or editor read each of the files, relying on best-practice investigative guidelines. In addition to the case files, reporters and editors examined hundreds of pages of court records and police documents and interviewed more than 100 assault survivors, sex crimes investigators, jurists, women's advocates and academic researchers.

Because of their unyielding dedication to bringing this injustice to the light, the Star Tribune team held various systems accountable to ensure these survivors receive justice. Part 9 of the series reveals “the reports, along with video testimony of dozens of women, galvanized victims of sexual violence, lawmakers and law enforcement officials alike. The 2019 Legislature will consider sweeping measures to fix ‘systemic failures’ identified by a state task force in the way the criminal justice system handles sex assault cases. The board that licenses all police officers is recommending new specialized training and clear investigative protocols, and local police departments and county attorneys are dedicating more staff and other resources to sex assault cases.”

The series continued to say that Kristen Houlton Shaw, executive director of the Sexual Violence Center in Minneapolis, claimed more women are reporting assaults and seeking assistance from her staff as a result of

heightened awareness, and more people are applying to be volunteer-advocates. Additionally, some of the women who told their stories have seen renewed interest, with several of their cases being reopened and leading to additional charges.

In honor of the countless hours of investigation, fact checking, writing, and production that went into the exhaustive exposé that is *Denied Justice*, the IGNITE Award applauds the Star Tribune's commitment and dedication. In particular, Brandon Stahl, MaryJo Webster, Renée Jones Schenider and Jennifer Bjorhus are being recognized for holding our systems accountable to ensure survivors of sexual assault receive the justice they deserve.

About the Conference on Crimes Against Women:

The goal of the Conference on Crimes Against Women is absolutely to create an overall reduction in the rate of crimes against women and, ultimately, eliminate violence against women. It is also, however, a primary part of our mission to improve the way crimes against women are investigated and prosecuted, as well as to improve the way victims are treated throughout the criminal justice system. The problem of domestic violence is so pervasive and at such epidemic proportions, that tangible decreases in the rate of violence against women will not be seen until huge volumes of women are safer in their homes. This volume happens through culture shifts, and conferences like CCAW create the momentum and the network for that very culture shift.

Classes are taught at CCAW with the intention of not only educating attendees, but also equipping them with the necessary tools to convey information to their departments and colleagues, thereby systematically improving agencies and increasing collective skill and competency levels. Ultimately, this training facilitates improvement of policies, practices, strategies, and collaborative responses to all crimes against women.

For additional information about the Conference, please visit www.conferencecaw.org.

About Genesis Women's Shelter & Support:

Since its founding in 1985, Genesis Women's Shelter & Support has been committed to providing quality safety and shelter to battered women and their children through crisis intervention and short-term crisis therapeutics and to reduce the occurrence of violence against women and children in the greater Dallas area. Genesis is also committed to raising the level of community awareness regarding the pervasiveness and effects of domestic violence. The organization provides free and confidential counseling and case

management to more than 700 residential clients and 2,500 non-residential clients each year. For additional information about Genesis Women's Shelter & Support, please visit www.genesisshelter.org.