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The View of Prevention Advocates on the Alec Baldwin Verbal Abuse Case

Prevention Supports and Resources Are Available to Parents

April 27, 2007 – As ABC’s daytime television program *The View* prepares to host guest Alec Baldwin on its Friday, April 27 show, the issue of verbal abuse and parents feeling ‘pushed to the edge’ remains a focus of national attention. In the aftermath of Mr. Baldwin’s now-famous voicemail message to his daughter, Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) America wants to ask whether parents are receiving the kinds of help and support they need, while letting all parents know about resources to help them deal with anger and frustration.

Emotional abuse can happen when a parent is under stress and does not know how to properly manage that stress; children who are emotionally abused may go on to experience depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, if not worse emotional and mental health issues. Emotional abuse – which can involve belittling, criticizing, and ignoring - is child abuse, plain and simple. Even divorced parents need to work together to make sure their children are protected from it.

“This situation reminds all of us that emotional abuse can happen in families of every race, religion, and socioeconomic status,” continued Hmurovich. “We want the public to ask how each of us can help parents to be the type of parents we really want to be and we would like all parents to know there are steps that can be taken to prevent directing stress toward a child. There are resources – like a national child abuse hotline – that are free and available at any time, day or night.”

“If we view Mr. Baldwin in isolation, we are missing an opportunity to identify changes in the way we can more systematically help parents promote healthy child development,” said PCA America President Jim Hmurovich. “While Mr. Baldwin must be held responsible for his actions, we believe this is a situation that highlights the reality that every parent has, at some point, experienced times of extreme stress, frustration and even anger. Stress can lead to behavior that is abusive.”

“Judging the behavior of other parents out of context is very difficult” said Dr. Janet Rosenzweig, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse – New Jersey. “Sometime we hear a parent setting an appropriate limit that may make a toddler cry; other times we may hear a parent screaming at their child in public; we need to use our judgment and determine if a child is really at risk.” “Understanding developmental stages is also important”, Rosenzweig added, noting that it is typical for adolescents, like Baldwin’s daughter, to switch their frame of reference from their family to their peers.

PCA America gives the following tips on how parents can manage stress and prevent verbally abusing their children. If you feel you’re about to lose your temper, you can:

- **Put Yourself in a Time-Out Chair.** Think about why you’re angry – is it your child, or is your child simply a convenient target for your anger?
- **Be Aware of What Triggers Your Temper.** Just recognizing your ‘temper triggers’ can help you stay calm during such situations and enable you to try to avoid certain circumstances in the first place.
- **Phone a Friend.**

- **Splash Cold Water on Your Face.**
- **Close Your Eyes and Imagine You're Hearing What Your Child is About to Hear.**
- **Take a Deep Breath... and Another. Then Remember: You are the Adult.**

New Jersey Parents who feel overwhelmed and fear losing their temper can call the Parents Anonymous Family Stress Line at 1-800 – THE-KIDS 24 hours a day; to bring parenting or other prevention programs to your community call Prevent Child Abuse – NJ at 1-800-CHILDREN. Download parenting materials at www-pca-nj.org.

ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE NEW JERSEY

Prevent Child Abuse - New Jersey is a statewide, non-profit organization founded in 1979. We are the New Jersey affiliate of Prevent Child Abuse America, a national coordinating body for chapters in 40 states. The mission of Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey is to lead statewide efforts to eliminate child abuse and neglect, in all its forms, for all of New Jersey's children. By establishing local partnerships Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey builds communities, strengthens families and empowers parents through parenting programs, education and training, advocacy and public awareness activities. For more information, please visit www.preventchildabuse-nj.org.

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