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**GREATER AUGUSTA ELDER ABUSE TASK FORCE LAUNCHES THE
ELDER VICTIM REFERRAL PROJECT**

(Augusta, Maine January 2007) The Greater Augusta Elder Abuse Task Force, a group of social service providers, law enforcement officers, legal professionals and other providers have launched the ***Elder Victim Referral Project*** in the Greater Augusta area to battle the growing problem of elder abuse and neglect. The project provides referrals and consultation for advocates, providers and others working on the front line against elder abuse and neglect.

In the Central Maine area, as is the case nationwide, elder abuse and neglect is a real and growing problem. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, between one and two million Americans aged 65 or older have been injured, exploited or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depend for care or protection. Here in Maine, according to the Maine Attorney General's office, an estimated 12,000 cases of elder abuse occur annually, of which only a tiny fraction are reported.

According to Karen Elliot, Director of Adult Protective Services and a member of the Augusta Elder Abuse Task Force "*Elder abuse is a hidden problem. No one program, agency or individual can eliminate it. The Elder Victim Referral Project is a first step in building a strong community response and making Maine a healthier and safer place to live*".

In August 2004, a coalition of social service providers, law enforcement officers, legal professionals and other providers began meeting to fashion a response to elder abuse and neglect. That coalition grew to become the Greater Augusta Elder Abuse Task Force. The ***Elder Victim Referral Project***, an outgrowth of the Task Force is a resource for community providers when assistance is needed in navigating difficult elder abuse and exploitation cases.

The aim of this project is to make available the multidisciplinary team members (including law enforcement, Adult Protective Service workers, domestic violence advocates, legal services providers and other providers of services to the elderly in the Greater Augusta area) for those who work with the elderly, have identified suspected abuse and seek guidance, referral or consultation. The Elder Victim Referral Project is not intended to replace services currently provided by Adult Protective Services or to substitute for other providers. Instead it is to provide a place for those working with the abused, neglected or at risk elderly to call if they are uncertain how, or if to proceed in getting help for their clients.

Community providers wishing to connect with the ***Elder Victim Referral Project*** can call 1-800-282-0764 ext:130 to reach the Coordinator for this project, Toby Simon.

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