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New Awareness Videos Shine Light on Youth Trafficking in Monroe County

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Rochester, N.Y., July 2, 2014 – The Center for Youth, in partnership with Monroe County’s Safe Harbour program, launched two videos to generate awareness of sex trafficking involving minors and to educate the public on local prevention and response efforts. Executive Director of The Center for Youth Dr. Elaine Spaul and County Executive Maggie Brooks are featured in one video that will serve as a public service announcement; the second animated video will be used as an educational tool. The videos can be found on The Center for Youth’s Facebook page and website, www.centerforyouth.net.

In 2013, The Center for Youth partnered with the Monroe County Department of Human Services to implement the Safe Harbour program to promote awareness of youth trafficking and identify and provide comprehensive services to potential victims. Since May 2013, the Safe Harbour program has identified 29 minors of human trafficking and provided services such as housing and case management. Many more youth have been identified as at-risk or potential victims.

“We credit the rise in identification to Safe Harbour’s efforts to raise awareness and conduct training with schools, healthcare providers and others who work with youth across the county,” Spaul said. “Unfortunately, we know there are more young people in our communities who need our help, and our hope is that these videos help us reach them.”

“Monroe County has already stepped-up in a big way to be a community that makes a difference when it comes to human trafficking, and this new campaign will be a success if it connects even one victim with the system of support that’s here to help,” Brooks said. “My



thanks to Executive Director Spaul, the entire Center for Youth, and all of our public, private, and non-profit partners who came together to make Safe Harbour a reality.”

The Safe Harbour program is named after the pivotal 2008 state legislation – Safe Harbour for Exploited Children Act – that ended the prosecution of minors under prostitution charges and instead identified minors as victims of commercial sexual exploitation by adults.

“We have found that letting youth know the law sees them as a victim of a crime instead of as a criminal is essential,” said Valerie Douglas, Director of Runaway and Homeless Youth and Counseling Services. “They can now feel safe to come forward and tell someone what is happening to them.”

In 2012-13, Monroe County was selected as one of five counties across the state to receive funds to support the Safe Harbour program. The Center for Youth serves as the county’s Safe Harbour lead agency with many integral community partners including the Monroe County Department of Human Services, County District Attorney and Sheriff’s offices, the Office of Children and Family Services, Rochester and other local police departments, school districts and youth services organizations. Local filmmakers from Rochester Institute of Technology produced the two awareness videos.

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About The Center for Youth

Started by youth for youth in 1971, The Center for Youth delivers a continuum of services to homeless and runaway youth and families in crisis, including emergency shelter, transitional housing programs and Crisis Nursery, which provides temporary childcare during emergencies. The Center’s school-based, counseling and community awareness programs aim to educate, engage and empower young people. All services are delivered with the knowledge that youth want to and can take responsibility for their life choices. For more information, visit www.centerforyouth.net or find us on social media: Facebook (Center for Youth) and Twitter (@center4youth).