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### **CAAFA Urges Communities to Consider Long-term Impact of COVID-19**

**Apache Junction, AZ:** Community Alliance Against Family Abuse (CAAFA) is holding steadfast to its mission to provide survivors of domestic and sexual violence with options for safety, justice, and healing in the midst of a universal crisis. Amidst the growing concern over COVID-19, individuals, families, and communities are already experiencing immense burdens on their financial, mental, and physical wellbeing. CAAFA has seen an increase in requests for services, likely due to the added stress and detriment the current public health crisis has engendered. History has shown us that crises such as these have a tendency to manufacture breeding grounds for domestic and sexual violence. During these very difficult times, agencies like CAAFA remain open and available so that survivors can access safety and support, but the reality is that circumstances intrinsic to the current public health crisis can produce long-term adverse outcomes for survivors. Along the trajectory could include long-term adverse outcomes for mental health, physical wellness, and financial wellbeing. For vulnerable persons, minorities, and single mothers who have experienced violence it can take a lot longer to restore and recover from such cataclysm.

Executive Director, Ray Villa, encourages community members to consider the long-term impact these events will have on our communities as a whole. "There's a lot of focus on what people are experiencing now, and that's important to consider and offer support for," says Ray. "No one is talking about the long-term effects this is going to have for the people we serve, and for our communities as a whole."

"You can't ignore the disparities that are present here, either," Mara White, Director of Programs adds. "Those who are most vulnerable, such as families that are housing insecure or single parents who make minimum wage, are going to rely on community and social supports because they're not able to purchase mass amounts of toilet paper or food, they don't have access to affordable medical care, and they don't have the option of being able to work from home. Our society rewards a very individualized method of thought, which is why we're seeing all of this illogical hoarding of goods. What we really need is a collective effort to build resilience around this."

CAAFA, along with many other agencies in Pinal and eastern Maricopa Counties, are working tirelessly to weave together a network of support that will uplift the community. Ray Villa notes that such organizations are going to need the help of its community members. "We've already had several individuals who have stepped up and offered support, whether through monetary donations or making homemade masks to give to employees and program participants. We can't do this work without them and we deeply appreciate their generosity." CAAFA encourages and even challenges community members to offer support that can help programs meet the critical needs of our communities and sustain their services so that they can continue to address problems that will surely persist months and even years ensuing this crisis. We are a resilient and caring community, now is the time to come together to support an ethos of humanity in action.

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