



# Reaching Out to New Partners

BY ESTA SOLER

**N**ew times call for new strategies, and the Family Violence Prevention Fund is breaking new ground and reaching out to new allies every day.

To stop abuse before it starts, we have launched an innovative and unprecedented new public education campaign, **Coaching Boys Into Men**. Conducted with The Advertising Council, this is the first-ever national campaign to invite men to be part of the solution by helping to stop violence against women.

*We are giving men the tools and the motivation to teach boys that violence against women is always wrong.*

We have known for years that many men are concerned about violence; they care deeply about keeping their daughters, sisters and female friends safe. But our research taught us that men sometimes feel defensive when the conversation turns to domestic violence. They don't know how to talk about the issue, or how they can help stop the abuse that plagues our society.

Through **Coaching Boys Into Men**, we are changing that. We are giving men the tools and the motivation to teach boys that violence against women is always wrong. We are grateful that so many service providers and battered women's advocates across the country have embraced this new campaign, encouraging local media to carry its public service announcements and using the brochures and materials the campaign offers.

As we reach out to men, we are also encouraging policy makers to focus more on prevention. We have known for decades that growing up in a violent home can have harmful—even devastating—consequences. It often leads to violence later in life, and health, behavioral, academic and other problems. Yet, our social service and justice systems do little to help families experiencing violence or to help children who have experienced or witnessed abuse. This is especially true for communities of color and poor communities, where responses are rarely culturally-specific, effective interventions are the exception and punishment tends to be dispensed unevenly.

Our new initiative will promote violence prevention measures that advance racial and economic justice because doing so is right and just and—in the end—it is the strongest approach. We will: advocate for more resources for prevention; seek support for programs that help children who have been exposed to violence; press for early supports to young families, to help parents age 16 to 24 who are at great risk for violence in the home; and press lawmakers and business leaders to make a real commitment to train young parents for jobs that pay a living wage, so they can support their families with dignity.

We also have enhanced our international work, to promote safety for women and families around the world. We recognize that violence against women in all its forms is related and driven by attitudes and cultural norms that can and must be changed.

In recent months, Americans have learned a tremendous amount about violence against women in Afghanistan and around the world. At this critical moment, we are making it our mission to help people recognize that the domestic violence, rapes, bride burnings, genital mutilation, sex trafficking and other horrors that occur every day around the world are not a series of isolated incidents. Rather, they are part of a vast continuum that wastes the lives of women and girls, devastates families and destroys communities across the globe.

When we talk about violence against women, we are really talking about the kind of world in which we will live. What our sons will learn and the kind of people they will become. The kind of societies we will build. Whether our daughters and their daughters will be safe.

The support for our work is vast and growing, and we invite you to join us. Together, we can invite men to help us keep women and girls safe, convince lawmakers to do much more to prevent abuse, and build alliances across borders so we can learn from anti-violence initiatives around the world. When we do that, we will finally create a world in which violence against women is a painful but distant memory of a shameful past. ■