



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION ALLIANCE

Virginia's leading voice
on sexual and domestic violence
for over 30 years.

Press Release

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Deb Downing Recognized Nationally as Leader in Sexual Assault Prevention

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA- The **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)**, a national expert in sexual violence prevention and response, recognizes Virginian Deb Downing as one of 30 recipients nationwide for the **2015 Visionary Voice Award**. The multidisciplinary group of honorees is selected for their outstanding work toward ending sexual violence.

The **Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance** nominated Deb Downing for her more than 40 years of volunteer activism and professional work to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and improve the lives of survivors.

Deb Downing began her career as a feminist activist in college and quickly found her home in the work to bring awareness to sexual and intimate partner violence and provide support and healing to survivors. As a survivor herself, Deb felt compelled to this work and has been a backbone of the movement in Virginia for most of her adult life. Deb worked for more than 21 years at the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), culminating in her role as the Assistant Section Chief and Program Manager for the Stop Violence Against Women Team.

Prior to her work with DCJS, Deb was a Domestic Violence Specialist for the Department of Social Services and the Executive Director of the Shelter for Help in Emergency in Charlottesville. She currently is an active volunteer across Virginia, providing support and mentorship to new directors at local sexual and domestic violence advocacy agencies and enthusiastically participating in the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance's Wild Women of Wisdom Task Force.

A core element to Deb Downing's legacy is **Camp Mabon**, a transformative outdoor experience for survivors of sexual assault that creates opportunities for survivors to find pathways to healing through nature, yoga, and community. Camp Mabon comes from Deb's vision that survivors can connect with other survivors to create support systems and experience healing and strength, and that nature can be an integral part of that healing.

The Visionary Voice Award is presented annually by the NSVRC in conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a national campaign held each April to raise awareness about preventing sexual violence. The award is presented to a wide range of industry professionals nominated by state, territory and tribal coalitions.

"We are pleased to honor our longtime friend and mentor, Deb Downing, for her powerful commitment and work toward ending sexual violence in Virginia," Action Alliance Executive Director Kristi VanAudenhoove said. "Deb's incredible legacy has shaped the landscape of sexual and intimate partner violence intervention and prevention strategies in Virginia, and improved the lives of vast numbers of community members across the Commonwealth."

Deb Downing will be presented with the 2015 Visionary Voice Award at the opening session of the Action Alliance's **Building Healthy Futures Conference** at 1pm, April 22, 2015, Four Points by Sheraton Richmond, 9901 Midlothian Turnpike in Richmond, Virginia.

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About the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

The Action Alliance has been Virginia's leading voice on sexual and domestic violence for 30 years and enhances response and prevention efforts through training, public policy advocacy, public awareness programs, and technical assistance to professionals.

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