Celebrating Solutions Award
Nomination Form

Legal name of organization: Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV)

Year established: 1979

Program nominated for award (if different): Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationship (SOAR)

Year established: 1989

Address: 422 Post Road, Suite 102

City/State/ZIP code: Warwick, RI 02888

Agency phone number: 401-467-9940

Contact person: Zulma Garcia

Title: Director of Policy

Phone number: 401-467-9940 x105

Fax number: 401-467-9943

E-mail address: Zulma@ricadv.org

Website address: www.ricadv.org

www.soarinri.org

Brief description of organization: The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) is an organization dedicated to ending domestic violence. We were formed in 1979 to support and assist the six domestic violence prevention agencies in Rhode Island. We not only support and give leadership to the six member agencies, but also strive to create justice for victims, and create awareness on the issue of domestic violence in RI.

Geographical area served: All Rhode Island

Is the organization tax-exempt under IRS 501 (c) (3) guidelines or a public agency/unit of government? Yes

Please check up to five descriptors that best apply to the program you are nominating:

__ Batterer treatment

___ Dating violence

___ Coalition/collaboration

___ Elder abuse

___ Counseling

___ Employment/training program
_ Faith-based
_ Health care setting
_ Hotline service
_ Legal aid/assistance
_ Prison-based
_X_ Public awareness/education
_ School/youth violence
_ Shelter-based

_ Stalking
_ Technology/Internet service
_ Transitional housing
_ Underserved population
_ University setting
_ Victim relocation
_X_ Other: Survivor Taskforce
As one of the goals of the Mary Byron Project is to disseminate information about cutting-edge programs and best practices, we wish to post exemplary Celebrating Solutions Award nominations on our website (www.marybyronproject.org). Those posted will include the organization’s website address, telephone number, and e-mail address. If you have concerns about this request, please address them to information@marybyronproject.org, prior to submitting a nomination.

By my signature on this letter, I grant the Mary Byron Project permission to use the contents of my nomination for the Celebrating Solutions Award in the manner and for the purposes set above. I further affirm that I am fully authorized to grant such permission to the Mary Byron Project.

__________________________________________
Signature

__________________________________________
Date 12-16-2011
1. **Describe the mission of your organization in five sentences or less.**

The purpose of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) is to eliminate domestic violence in Rhode Island. Our mission is to support and enhance the work of our member agencies, and to promote leadership on the issue of domestic violence. We envision a society where domestic violence is not tolerated because communities are enlightened and responsive to the needs of victims and their children.

Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR) is a grassroots taskforce of the RICADV made up of domestic violence survivors dedicated to lending their voices to change the systems that oppress women, while educating the community about the dynamics of domestic violence. The mission of SOAR is to promote, advocate and work for the elimination of domestic violence and embody and give visibility to the voices of abused women.

2. **Describe the most innovative aspects of the program you are submitting for consideration.**

SOAR is the only group in Rhode Island working specifically on systems change that is consisted entirely of domestic violence survivors, and is a leader among similar groups in the nation. SOAR is not a support group, but rather an organization of women ready to make changes in the systems that allow domestic violence to exist. This empowerment-focused practice helps develop the capacity of individuals to understand their environment, make choices, take responsibility for their choices, and influence their life situations through organization and advocacy.

Victims of domestic violence voluntarily come together from all geographical areas of Rhode Island to rebuild their self-esteem and regain a sense of power over their life as well as to work with systems that service victims of domestic violence. What is unique about our task force is that we have chosen to organize survivors of domestic violence so that they can become empowered to speak for themselves and to choose what issues they want to address. SOAR does this work in order to guarantee that the needs of victims are being met. Additionally, it is a place where women come together to learn from each other and work collectively to change systems. Furthermore, as survivors, we give courage, strength and respect to each other as we try to educate our community about life after domestic violence.

Most of the decision-making about what the members would like to focus on occurs during the planning retreats that are held once per year with SOAR members and staff. The plan created at the retreat is then incorporated into the work-plan of SOAR staff. During the monthly meetings the plan is reviewed, refined, updated and changed as needed. The plan always reflects SOAR’s three major areas of work: Leadership building, community awareness and systems advocacy. Also during the meetings, we plan our public education and outreach, discuss legislation, organize events, and work towards achieving the goals that SOAR members have chosen. Members provide trainings and presentations to schools, colleges, and community centers to raise awareness around the dynamics of domestic violence. SOAR members also have a great presence in the media and provide interviews to local television and radio shows. They write about their experiences in the SOAR newsletter and the RICADV blog.
At each SOAR meeting we provide childcare, transportation and food to make the meetings more accessible for members.

SOAR members serve on the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The SOAR members are integral in influencing and shaping the work of the Coalition. Their voices and concerns are integrated into the Coalition's yearly strategic plan and help develop goals and priorities for the work in the year ahead.

SOAR has led and participated in different projects that aim to create systemic changes that ensure procedures and safeguards are used to promote victims' and children's safety. Each year our Legislative Platform attempts to address issues that affect domestic violence victims and their children. SOAR members are very active in reviewing legislation and lobbying to create laws that will protect victims of domestic violence and their children. SOAR members are involved in systems advocacy by providing testimony at the legislature and involvement with different statewide committees. SOAR's most recent project included lobbying for a bill to increase funding for court advocacy programs, which was passed into law in 2009.

RICADV and SOAR staff provides leadership building and other trainings to help survivors overcome the silence that surrounds domestic violence and learn the value of their voices. They explore and discover ways of using a very painful time in their lives as instrument of change. The leadership building is implemented through trainings and one-on-one meetings with staff. These trainings aim to provide tools for their personal lives as well as for the advocacy work SOAR members do. For example, some of the trainings recently attended by SOAR members were on the topics of: Resume building, budgeting, and public speaking. This year SOAR members have also participated in trainings such as a tool kit for the social activist, nonviolence training, and promoting your message in the media. SOAR members also are able to participate in any of the trainings provided by RICADV throughout the year. In addition, SOAR staff meets individually with each member to provide guidance and support as they prepare to do presentations and other activities.

Finally, SOAR recruits, trains and empowers other survivors to use their voices and experiences to challenge and change the areas that continue to be barriers to keeping women safe and maintaining violence-free lives.

3. Describe your program’s implementation. What barriers did your organization have to overcome? How did you marshal the necessary resources for implementation?

Implementation:

SOAR was founded by a group of women who were involved in a support group but wanted to move on from the inner healing work of the support group to address the root causes of domestic violence. In turn, they felt they could be a support system for current victims and share their experiences in order to demonstrate that change and healing are possible. They also realized the importance of having a group run by survivors, ensuring that the voices of those affected were prominent in the battered women's movement. They formed with the mission to "promote,
advocate, and work for the elimination of domestic violence and embody and give visibility to the voices of abused women."

**Barriers:**

To be able speak about their experiences, SOAR members have to overcome internal barriers, breaking the silence, the taboo, and the shame they may feel. Through the trainings and the support they receive from the SOAR staff, they are able to understand their roles as activists and educators.

Personal barriers the individual members encounter often affect the overall group. For instance, most SOAR members are single mothers that have to provide for their children themselves, and their ability to commit to the work is sometimes limited by their work or school schedule. Others may experience personal difficulties directly related to the abuse. For example, Maria*, a very active member, could not attend meetings or give presentations for the few months following the release of her abuser as a safety precaution. To overcome these difficulties, SOAR staff provides referrals and resources to members, callers and other people encountered in our offices or in the community.

In the community, SOAR members are sometimes still seen as victims and as people in crisis. Unfortunately, this can affect their credibility and effectiveness. SOAR members make efforts to have others see them in a different light, but find that they often have to prove to others that their voices as survivors of abuse should be taken seriously.

RICADV Board members, advisory committee members and others have all commented on the enlightening experience of having SOAR members present when discussing upcoming work and planning in the domestic violence movement.

**Resources:**

SOAR’s close alliance with RICADV has assisted in overcoming the limited availability of funds for systems advocacy. RICADV is a statewide agency dedicated to ending domestic violence. RICADV provides SOAR with office space, seed money, access to staff and fiscal sponsorship. RICADV has helped SOAR find the means to express their mission. RICADV connects SOAR members with the media, speaking engagements and to boardrooms and state house forums. SOAR has helped RICADV and its member agencies increase their sensitivity to victims’ needs and increase the efficacy of their support programs.

4. **How do you know your program works? Please site two examples. Although anecdotal examples are helpful, at least one example must include quantitative data.**

For the last four years SOAR has committed its work to the Child Custody and Visitation Solutions Project (CCVSP). The goal of this project is to improve the conditions for victims of domestic violence and their children while they are locked in child custody and visitation battles with their abusers. Through this project, SOAR was successful in gathering community support and forming the Child Custody and Visitation Advisory Committee. This committee is integrated
by survivors, attorneys, advocates and other court personnel who came together to examine the gaps and strengths of the Child Custody and Visitation System and to create solutions that will help improve the system.

Through the CCVSP, SOAR has surveyed and interviewed victims of domestic violence, judges, attorneys and other professionals in the family court system in Rhode Island to develop a 360 degree view of the strengths and gaps of the system. The information collected was used to create a list of twelve recommendations, and was published in the “Safety for Children: A Report on the Impact of Rhode Island’s Custody System on Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children.” The project has gained national notoriety after its publication on the August/September issue of “The Domestic Violence Report” as well as in an issue of “Synergy” the newsletter published by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Justices.

SOAR is currently working towards the implementation of the recommendations that were created. Since the release of the report Family Court increased their trainings on domestic violence. As a matter of fact RICADV staff facilitated two trainings for judges which included SOAR members as speakers. SOAR is also working on the introduction of new legislation with the support of key stakeholders.

SOAR strives to break the silence and increase the awareness about domestic violence. In 2010 SOAR members reached more than 1,300 people in the community through 29 presentations in different schools and other organizations. In 2011, two SOAR members were the focus of our annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month Campaign. This year’s campaign was entitled “What They See Can Hurt For Life,” designed to increase awareness about the lifetime impact that witnessing domestic violence can have on children, and what the community can do to help a child heal. One SOAR member was the voice of a radio ad which aired in both English and Spanish. Another SOAR member was interviewed for a feature story in Rhode Island’s major newspaper. SOAR and RICADV also used social media such as Facebook to spread their message, news, and interviews. RICADV currently has 1,470 fans.

SOAR members told us recently why they wanted to be a part of SOAR. Below are some of their reasons:

“I joined SOAR because I feel that I can bring to SOAR my knowledge of the court system, my knowledge of getting abused, being a victim, and becoming a survivor.” – Carrie*, SOAR member

“I joined SOAR because of the inspiration of the courageous women that are in SOAR.” – Mary*, SOAR member

“I joined SOAR in order to lend a voice to victims and survivors. I bring my unique story to SOAR, and my experiences, talents and gifts.” – Lola*, SOAR member

“I joined SOAR because I wanted to help other women.” –Debra*, SOAR member

* Names have been changed.
5. **Who are your key partners? What are their roles?**

SOAR has developed successful collaborations with RI Family Court, RI Legal Services, Roger Williams University Law School, Family Services of RI, Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center, Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center, Sojourner House, Women's Center of Rhode Island, Women's Resource Center, and the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County. These agencies are actively working on the Custody and Visitation Solutions project, by sending one representative to the Custody and Visitation Advisory Committee and helping on different aspects of the project.

For the past two years, SOAR has developed a new partnership with the Sanford-Brown Institute, a training program for those entering the health care field. Last year SOAR participated in their “Healthy Relationships Week” and had SOAR members speak to students about domestic violence. This year, SOAR participated in their “Give Back Week” which included a speaker from SOAR and a DV 101 training provided by Elizabeth Buffum Chace. Both years SOAR had an information table to provide information and materials regarding SOAR membership and other domestic violence resources. Many students spoke up about their own experiences and stayed after to talk with SOAR members at the conclusion of the workshop. The school is interested in collaborating in the future and stated that they were impressed with the “apply it to work” information that they received about screening for domestic violence with their clients.

6. **Could/should your program be replicated in other areas of the country? Why?**

SOAR would be an excellent program to replicate across the country. It fits into the spectrum of intervention, healing and empowerment for victims of domestic violence. There is a need for more emphasis on supporting survivors once they are no longer in crisis and are rebuilding their lives. Groups like SOAR can be started on a simple scale with a few interested members, or be implemented on a larger scale with the assistance of local shelters for chapters. Grassroots community organizing models can be easily modified for any survivor’s region.

The benefit of having organizations led by survivors, such as SOAR, is twofold: survivor groups contribute to healthy families and communities, and help to shift social norms towards an intolerance of violence against women. Because domestic violence is inter-generational, providing an outlet for survivors and helping them remain free from abuse helps them to break the cycle of violence within their own families and their communities. The education and advocacy that SOAR provides in our state will help to change social norms and attitudes to promote a society which does not tolerate violence against women.

In fact, SOAR has been approached for training and technical assistance on how to create new programs in North Carolina, Texas, Hawaii, Colorado, Connecticut, Washington DC, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota. A goal of SOAR in the future is to locate the funding to create a how-to manual to distribute to groups interested in organizing survivors.

7. **Does your agency have a workplace policy that addresses domestic violence? If so,**
please include a copy.

Yes.

8. Has the agency and/or nominated program received VAWA funding?

Yes.
POLICY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV)

A. PURPOSE: RICADV is committed to promoting the health and safety of our employees, and to providing leadership on the issue of domestic violence. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for employees and management to address the occurrence of domestic violence in the workplace. These guidelines apply as policy to employees of RICADV, but can be used as guidelines with volunteers and interns as applicable.

B. POLICY:

1. Early Intervention and Education Prevention Strategies
   a. It is the policy of RICADV to provide available support and assistance to employees who are experiencing domestic violence. This support may include: confidential means for coming forward for help, resource and referral information, additional security at the workplace, work schedule adjustments and leave necessary to obtain medical, counseling, or legal assistance. Written resource and referral information shall be available in languages understood by all employees. Other appropriate assistance will be provided based on individual need.
   b. RICADV will maintain and circulate to all employees a list of resources for people experiencing domestic violence and perpetrators of domestic violence.

2. Confidentiality
   a. In all responses to domestic violence, RICADV will respect the confidentiality and autonomy of the adult experiencing domestic violence to direct his or her own life, in accordance with RICADV policy and Rhode Island law which mandates reporting for certain populations.

3. Leave Options for Employees Who Are Experiencing Threats of Violence
   a. At times, an employee may need to be absent from work due to family violence, and the length of time should be determined by the individual's situation. This time period shall be determined through collaboration with the employee, supervisor and Executive Director.
   b. The employee, supervisor and the Executive Director are encouraged to explore whether paid options can be arranged which will help the employee cope with a domestic violence situation without having to take a formal unpaid leave of absence.

4. Procedures for Employees with Performance Issues Related to Domestic Violence
   a. RICADV recognizes that people experiencing domestic violence may have performance or conduct problems such as chronic absenteeism or inability to concentrate as a result of abuse. When an employee subject to the Progressive Discipline procedures (as outlined in section IV, Job Performance, of the RICADV Personnel Policy) discloses that the job performance or conduct problem is caused by domestic violence, a referral for appropriate assistance should be offered to the employee.
   b. The supervisor, in collaboration with the employee and Executive Director, should allow a reasonable time for the employee to obtain assistance regarding the domestic violence.

5. Disciplinary Procedures for Employees Who Commit Acts or Threats of Violence
   a. RICADV is committed to a workplace in which the perpetration of domestic violence is neither tolerated nor excused. Any physical assault or threat made by an employee while on RICADV premises, during work hours, or at a RICADV sponsored social event is a serious violation of RICADV policy. This policy applies not only to acts against other employees, but to
acts against all other persons, including intimate partners. Employees found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

b. Employees who are convicted of a crime as a result of domestic violence or subject of a Permanent Domestic Violence Restraining Order, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge, depending on the circumstances.

c. RICADV understands that there is the possibility of wrongful conviction of assault in the case of victims of domestic violence who act in self-defense and will consider the context of the conviction before deciding on disciplinary action or discharge.

C. GUIDELINES REGARDING ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PERPETRATORS

1. General Guidelines
   a. The following information is provided to help employees of RICADV who are experiencing domestic violence obtain the services they desire and to enhance the safety of RICADV workplace.

   b. If a supervisor believes that an employee is in an abusive relationship, but the employee has not disclosed this to their supervisor, the supervisor should address any job performance issues and refer the employee to the Executive Director and/or community resources.

   c. Supervisors will respond in a nonjudgmental and supportive manner which is not dependent on the employee's decisions regarding the relationship.

2. Options for Employees Who Are Experiencing Domestic Violence
   a. The following are options which the employee may choose to take.

   b. Call the police if you are in immediate danger.

   c. Talk with a trusted co-worker, supervisor or the Executive Director about your situation.

   d. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE, the Stuenside Helpline at (800) 494-8100, a sister agency outside of Rhode Island or one of RICADV's member agencies.

   e. Notify your supervisor of the possible need to be absent and find out your leave options. Be clear about your plan to return to work and maintain communications with your supervisor during your absence.

   f. If you are concerned about your safety at work, submit a recent photograph of the abuser and a copy of your protection order to your supervisor. This assists your employer in identifying the abuser should he/she appear in the workplace.

   g. Work with your supervisor or the Executive Director to develop a safety plan (See Appendix A) and to obtain assistance for documentation of any physical and/or mental health consequences of the abuse.

3. Options for Employees Who Are Perpetrators of Domestic Violence
   a. Contact your supervisor or the Executive Director for consultation and resources.

   b. Contact a certified batterer's intervention program.
4. Options for Other Employees Who Have Concerns about Domestic Violence
   a. If you know or believe that a co-worker is a victim of domestic violence, communicate your concerns for her or his safety. Be clear that your role is to help and not to judge. Refer the employee to her or his supervisor, the Executive Director or to domestic violence services. Maintain the confidentiality of the domestic violence circumstances and any other referrals under this policy to the extent permitted by law. Discuss the employee's situation with the Executive Director for further guidance.

   b. Report any threats or violence that you experience or witness to your supervisor or the Executive Director.
Appendix A: Workplace Safety Plan

Components of a Workplace Safety Plan

a. Consider obtaining a civil order for protection and make sure that it is current and on hand at all times. Include the workplace on the order. A copy should be provided to the police, your supervisor, and the reception area if the perpetrator threatens or harasses you at work or violates the civil order for protection in any way.

b. Consider providing a picture of the perpetrator to the reception area.

c. Consider identifying an emergency contact person should your employer be unable to contact you.

d. Review the safety of your parking arrangements.

e. Consider requesting a change and/or unpredictable rotations of your work schedule, work site or work assignment if such a change is possible and would enhance your safety at work.

f. Consider having your telephone calls screened at work.

g. Consider requesting additional security measures for your work site. It may be possible to post security personnel near your work site, install security cameras or silent alarms at your work site, relocate your work station to a more secure area, or provide you with a cellular phone for emergency use at work.

h. Review the safety of your child care arrangements. If you have a protective order, make sure the provider has a copy.
RHODE ISLAND COALITION
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SEMI-FINALIST

2ND ROUND INFORMATION
A Task Force of the
RI Coalition Against
Domestic Violence

August 7, 2012

422 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02888
Phone (401) 467-9940
Fax (401) 467-4872
www.soarinri.org

Celebrating Solutions Awards
Mary Byron Project, Inc.
10401 Linn Station Road, Suite 116
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Ms. Roth,

On behalf of Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR), we are excited to learn that SOAR has been selected as one of the semi-finalist for the Mary Byron Project’s Celebration Solutions Award.

Enclosed please find the information requested for further consideration of the nominating committee. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at zulma@ricadv.org or by telephone at 401-467-9940.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully submitted,

Zulma Garcia
Director of Policy
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR)
422 Post Road, Suite 102
Warwick, RI 02888

Additional Questions

What is the approximate number of individuals served annually by the applicant or nominee?

SOAR has a membership base of 68 members. All members are provided the opportunity to participate in leadership development trainings, development of policy advocacy skills, as well as skills for public speaking. The trainings equip them with the tools and the platform to advocate against domestic violence using their own voices and experiences. Additionally, SOAR has been successful in applying and obtaining scholarships for its members, and providing other opportunities to help members reach their professional and educational goals.

The service to the community consists of public education and legislative advocacy which SOAR members also participate. It is difficult to provide a number of how many people have been served. Our guess would be countless of victims/survivors and their children will benefit from the legislative lobbying SOAR members engaged in to ensure the passage of the anti-strangulation bill, which made strangulation a felony in cases involving domestic violence. Last year, SOAR members reached 695 people through presentations and trainings. As a result these individuals increased their awareness about the dynamics of domestic violence and the barriers that face women and their children when they leave the abusive relationship. This number includes court personnel, attorneys, mediators and members of the general public.

How many paid staff and volunteers are used to administer the nominated program?

SOAR has an equivalent of one full-time staff person. The coordinator position is a part-time position working three full days a week and one organizer position, part-time working sixteen hours per week. In addition there are 17 volunteers who are members of the SOAR core group. The staff is responsible for general organization, training, preparing members for presentations and interviews and running the day to day tasks of the SOAR office. The members of the core group provided presentations, media interviews and participate in different committees.

Are there past awards, accolades, and grants furnished upon the applicant or nominee that would further exemplify its success in combating domestic violence?

SOAR has been recognized as a national model for working with survivors of domestic violence. SOAR members have been asked to present their model at state coalition conferences in Texas and Hawaii. In 2011, SOAR members and staff presented two workshops on community organizing at the annual conference organized by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. In
January 2010 a SOAR member was the keynote speaker at the conference “Celebrating Our Successes – STOPPING the Violence” organized by the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. In January 2009, a SOAR member presented at a National Meeting of Transitional Advocates organized by the National Network to End Domestic Violence. In Rhode Island, SOAR members were featured panelists at the national conference entitled Media Matters, where they presented their experiences on sharing their stories with the media. Additionally on a local level, SOAR has received several awards. In 2003, SOAR received the Exceptional Woman Award for its work toward victims’ rights. This award was given by the Women’s Center of RI. Also, in 2004 SOAR received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition presented by Senator James Langevin. Finally, it is important to recognize that on an individual level, members of SOAR have been recognized for national and local awards. In 2007, Tori Heaton, one of our members, received the ROSE award for her outstanding journey from victim to survivor. In 2009, Carmen Cruz, also a member of SOAR, received an award from the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Department for her lobbying to pass the “Homicide Prevention Bill.” In 2010, another member Elvia Sanchez received the same award for her work in raising awareness about domestic violence in our state.

If funding were not an issue, what (if any) changes or additions would you make to your program in the future? What are the long term goals for your program? We are interested in hearing both your practical goals in addition to any lofty dreams you might have for the future.

There are several changes and additions we would like to make if funding were not an issue. One of them would be to revive our leadership development program called Project STRIVE. This program is a ten-week intensive leadership and advocacy training which was successful in creating leadership and opportunities for SOAR members. Two of the members that went through that program in 2003 were able to obtain positions as advocates at the different domestic violence agencies; one of them ran for public office; and another one became the director of a shelter program.

In the area of custody and visitation, we would strengthen our work to implement the recommendations from our Child Custody and Visitation Solutions Project (CVS) by adding a full-time staff position that could be dedicated to this project. We would partner with different organizations to create educational and support materials that will help victims dealing with their custody and visitation cases. We would work to make the Custody and Visitation Advisory Committee permanent in order to create continuity of the work we are doing.

Finally, we would work to replicate the SOAR model in other states. This has been a longstanding dream for SOAR members. In order to meet this goal, we would need to hire a full-time staff person to provide technical assistance and training to other coalitions wanting to establish a survivor’s taskforce.
In addition to the questions and requirements listed in your letter, your responses to the questions below will help the final review committee to better understand the value of your program and services. Your answers to these questions should be as brief and focused as you think is needed. Any requested supplemental resources should be attached.

1. Please provide information regarding any new success or accomplishments of SOAR since the application was submitted.

   Since our submission for consideration, SOAR has no new developments to report.

2. Are there any new initiatives which SOAR is planning to undertake?

   SOAR has recently partnered with a local theater company, The Trinity Repertory Company (Trinity Rep), to write, produce, and perform a play based on SOAR members’ stories. The premier is scheduled for October 29, 2012. The acting coaches and writers from Trinity Rep will help our members write their scripts, while offering them acting lessons. The stories will have different themes and formats: some will be monologues, and others may incorporate poetry and music. Regardless, all of the stories will be woven together by the commonalities of the members’ experiences. This new initiative will allow SOAR members to bring their message against domestic violence to a new audience in a different format. After the script is completed, SOAR plans to further its message by working with other organizations, schools, and groups in the area and around the country to replicate this performance. The partnership with Trinity Rep provides this initiative with credibility, as this theater company is one of the best known and respected in New England, reaching an estimated audience of 120,000 people per year.
SOAR 2010-2011 Projected Budget

Last completed fiscal year: June 30 2011

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<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel</td>
<td>$ -</td>
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<tr>
<td>fundraising</td>
<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misc./bank fees</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 79,134.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**NOTE:** All line items that do not contain a dollar figure are expenses provided in kind by RICADV
August 8, 2012

Marcia Roth
Executive Director
Mary Byron Project
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, Kentucky 40223

Dear Ms. Roth,

I am pleased to write you in support of SOAR's (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships) application for the Mary Byron Project's Celebrating Solutions Award which will support the work of survivors of domestic violence. As CEO of Women's Fund Rhode Island, I have been proud to work with staff and volunteers at SOAR. In this capacity, I have worked with SOAR on numerous projects, most recently partnering with them to examine and address systemic issues within the Family Court System that negatively impact victims of domestic violence and their children.

Domestic Violence is a societal problem impacting every community; in 2010, the six domestic violence agencies in Rhode Island directly assisted over 10,410 victims of domestic violence and answered over 14,913 hotline calls. The Women's Fund works to improve the status of women and girls across the state and address the systemic inequities that impede the ability to thrive. What is unique about our grant making program is the focus on the constituent's inclusion in the articulation, planning and implementation of programs and projects. Without question, SOAR has been a wise investment of the Women's Fund philanthropic dollars.

SOAR is unique, in that it provides survivors of domestic violence with the platform and the resources to have their stories heard. As a task-force operated through the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, SOAR members have been able to maintain ownership of their work and have carved out a unique position within the public policy advocacy community in Rhode Island. Their innovative opportunities for survivors to take on important roles in leadership, community organization and advocacy to implement policies and programs that have a positive impact on all Rhode Islanders could not be accomplished without the support of organizations such as yours.

Thank you very much for your consideration of SOAR's application. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (401) 274-4564.

Sincerely,

Marcia Coné
CEO

One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
401.274.4564 tel
401.272.1259 fax

www.wfri.org
August 3, 2012

To the Selection Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write in support of Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR); a semi-finalist under consideration for receiving the Mary Byron Celebrating Solutions Award. SOAR has been and continues to be a vital resource for all families in the state of Rhode Island. They are providers of services on every level, beginning with examining the unique needs and strengths of survivors of domestic violence, to providing ongoing support to families, and finally by advocating and educating in the policy and legislative arenas. In each of these ways, SOAR is breaking the cycle of violence through a state-of-the-art comprehensive program of prevention and intervention.

I have worked in various capacities with the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s sister agencies over the past twenty-five years. Within the last two years I, along with another faculty member of Salve Regina University, have had the privilege of working closely with the coordinator of the SOAR program, Carmen Recalde-Russo, on a project involving the use of computer programs for stress reduction with survivors of domestic violence. We were awarded a grant through the university to work with two area programs focused on the victims of domestic violence. SOAR was the natural choice to partner with because of their longstanding and excellent reputation in the state, along with a willingness to embrace creative and innovative ways to address the challenging needs of the women they serve. A high level of cooperation and commitment on the part of SOAR to engage the survivors and ensure that the process is empowering for the women has made the project a most successful endeavor.

SOAR is without a doubt an excellent example of a model program. Since its inception the group has worked tenaciously to both keep all aspects of the state informed of their work and encourage community members to be involved with its efforts. SOAR has a unique opportunity in the state of Rhode Island. Since travel from one end of the state to the other can be easily accomplished within one hour, it is the social service culture norm to work in collaboration with programs state-wide. SOAR’s work extends to all of Rhode Island’s thirty-nine towns and cities.

In addition to programming and policy development, SOAR has a strong presence in the education community. Members of its speakers’ bureau provide informational sessions, in-service trainings and multiple internships for students. In keeping with their mission, trainings are generally free and open to the public.
The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence was established in 1979 and since that time has continued to build a program that is a cornerstone of our social service community. I believe that the breadth and depth of the programming evidenced by SOAR could inspire similar work in many communities around the country. Please accept my unconditional letter of support for this outstanding program. If you should need any further information, please contact me at 401-341-3173.

Sincerely,

Mary Montminy-Danna, LICSW, PhD
Associate Professor, Social Work
Salve Regina University
July 30, 2012

Ms. Carmen Recalde-Russo
SOAR
c/o RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
422 Post Road
Warwick, RI 02888

Dear Carmen,

On behalf of the Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center, I am pleased to support SOAR, a project of the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and their application for funding.

Our agency is designed to provide comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence. Our programs include: our Safe Home and Transitional Housing Program, 24 hour Helpline, Court Program, Community Support Groups, Latina Advocacy Program, Community Awareness Programs, DELTA Program, Safe Families Collaboration Project and the Law Enforcement Advocate Program.

Throughout the years, we have had the fortunate opportunity to have worked closely with SOAR in providing awareness and education to our local community. SOAR members have had the strength to live through domestic violence and have provided insight and inspiration to our many audiences. Our community has been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to hear first-hand the experiences of SOAR members.

Additionally, SOAR has exhibited an innovative approach in providing survivors with the opportunity to make systems change in order to ensure that the safety of survivors and children. This is evident in their work with the Child Custody and Visitation Solutions Project. SOAR members are also very active in reviewing legislation and lobbying to create laws that will protect victims about domestic violence and their children. This has directly impacted the clients in which we provide services.

I enthusiastically support SOAR and request favorable consideration of this request. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (401) 723-3057 or via email Linda@bvadvocacycenter.org.

Sincerely,

Linda Impagliazzo
Executive Director