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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVOR AND ADVOCATE WITH SPECIAL COURAGE AWARD

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a component of the Office of Justice Programs, awarded the Special Courage Award to Jennifer Elmore, a sexual assault survivor and advocate. The Special Courage Award category honors a victim or survivor who has shown exceptional perseverance or determination in dealing with victimization. It may also acknowledge one who has acted bravely to aid a victim or to prevent victimization.

“Jennifer Elmore is the epitome of strength and courage, an incredibly brave woman who survived a tragic and abusive childhood at the hands of the person who should have protected her,” said OJP Acting Assistant Attorney General Maureen A. Henneberg. “Yet she persevered and became a voice of hope, change and inspiration for other sexual assault survivors.”

It has taken Elmore decades to find her voice after unimaginable sexual trauma. Her father, a retired Army two-star general, sexually abused her throughout her childhood, starting when she was three years old. In 2015, when she was an adult and living in North Carolina, Elmore reported the abuse to officials at Fort Bragg Military Installation. He was charged with six counts of rape and incest, only to have the case dismissed when the military’s highest appeals court changed course and found that a five-year statute of limitations existed for sexual assaults that occurred in the military between 1986 and 2006.

Despite this setback, Elmore helped to form Survivors United, an organization of military crime victim survivors advocating for changes in the way the military investigates and prosecutes sexual assault. She also testified before the Defense Advisory Committee appointed by Congress to assess the military’s response to the prevalence of sexual assault within its ranks and she has addressed multiple victims’ rights conferences. After five years of investigation and two separate criminal inquiries in the military and the Commonwealth of Virginia, her father pled guilty to aggravated sexual battery.

“Jennifer Elmore survived unspeakable trauma and emerged as a beacon of hope for survivors of sexual assault,” said OVC Acting Director Katherine Darke Schmitt. “We are awed and inspired by her courage and by the extraordinary depth of her compassion for so many others who have walked her path.”

The selection committee for the NCVRW awards this year chose two individuals to receive the

Special Courage Award. In addition to Elmore, Jennifer Luther from Centerville, Utah, was honored for her commitment and advocacy in helping to rehabilitate individuals who have become involved in criminal behavior.

Every April, OVC leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week. President Ronald W. Reagan proclaimed the first Victims' Rights Week in 1981, calling for greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of victims. The 40th anniversary of NCVRW took place this year, April 18-24, and featured the theme, "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities," which emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to victims.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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