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PRESS STATEMENT

Regarding the Homicide of Lauren Walder DeWise

[Bozeman, MT – Thursday, January 11, 2018] Our hearts go out to the family, friends, and community of Lauren Walder DeWise, who was killed in Belgrade on Sunday. She was allegedly killed by her estranged husband, Joseph Paul DeWise. We grieve this tragic loss of life and extend our deepest condolences to all who have been impacted by this heinous crime – the fourth domestic violence homicide in the Gallatin Valley in the last two years.

A banking center manager at Rocky Mountain Bank in Bozeman, Lauren was a kindhearted, caring friend and mother. She was driven in her career and always pushed herself to be better in everything she did. We are particularly devastated for Lauren's three-year-old daughter. No child should ever have to experience the loss of their mother through such tragedy or endure the suffering caused by violence in the home.

Lauren had left Mr. DeWise less than two months ago, hoping to rebuild a life for herself and her daughter. We know that attempting to end an abusive relationship can be one of the most dangerous times for a victim. When a victim leaves an abusive relationship, there is an elevated risk of escalating violence and homicide as the perpetrator tries to retain power and control over the situation.

As the population of Gallatin Valley grows, so does the number of domestic violence cases in our community. Last year, HAVEN worked with 980 survivors of domestic violence, up from 953 in the previous year. The level of violence seen in these cases has also intensified, as evidenced by the number of homicides in recent years. A number of factors can increase the risk of homicide in abusive relationships, including the use of drugs or alcohol, access to firearms, economic stressors and lack of access to resources.

Victims of domestic violence deserve safety and justice. The State of Montana must continue to evaluate and strengthen its response to domestic violence to ensure that no more lives are lost, that no more children experience the tragedy of losing a beloved parent. Each and every one of us must take a stand to say, “NO MORE”— because one in five people in the Gallatin Valley is a victim of abuse. They are our loved ones, neighbors, coworkers, and friends.

They are counting on us.

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HAVEN encourages anyone experiencing relationship abuse to call our 24-hour support line at (406) 586-4111. HAVEN’s program and services include counseling, support groups, shelter, legal advocacy and other wraparound services to support survivors at any and all stages in their relationship. To learn more, call (406) 586-7689 or visit havenmt.org.