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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Suicide Prevention Action Network Applauds President Bush for Signing Youth Suicide Prevention Bill

*SPAN USA Urges Congress to Fully Appropriate Funding for
Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Programs*

Washington, D.C. (October 21, 2004) – The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) today applauded President Bush for signing into law the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. The new law amends the Public Health Act and authorizes \$82 million over three years to states, Indian tribes and colleges and universities for the development of youth suicide prevention and intervention programs. Suicide, the third-leading cause of death among young people, takes the life of one person under the age of 25 every two hours and 15 minutes. One in 12 college students today has made a suicide plan.

The bill calls for early screening programs to identify mental illness in children and provide treatment referrals, training for community child-care professionals and the authorization of a Suicide Prevention Resource Center, which will provide training and technical assistance to states and other eligible entities.

Jerry Reed, executive director of SPAN USA, attended the bill-signing ceremony, which took place in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. He applauded President Bush for his support of this vital piece of legislation. “The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act is the first authorization to be signed into law specifically for youth suicide prevention. If fully funded, this bill can save the lives of thousands of young people. In 2001, suicide, which is the third-leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 10-24, claimed more than 4,000 young lives. SPAN USA will continue to work with Congress to ensure full funding of this legislation and establish mental health parity to ensure that all Americans have access to mental health services.”

“Today is an important day for thousands of survivors, who have fought hard to turn their loss into the prevention of someone else’s,” Reed continued. “SPAN USA is thankful for Senator Gordon Smith and his wife, Sharon Smith, for their courage to turn their grief into action.”

For more information on suicide prevention, visit SPAN USA’s website at www.spanusa.org or contact Lindsay Rubin at 202-715-1548 or lindsay.rubin@dittus.com.

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SPAN USA is the nation’s only suicide prevention organization dedicated to leveraging grassroots support among suicide survivors and others to advance public policies that prevent suicide. Since its founding nine years ago, SPAN USA has led the drive to make suicide a public health priority by building political will and calling for the development and implementation of a national strategy for suicide prevention. Using its extensive grassroots network of survivors and advocates, SPAN USA has actively promoted the cause on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures.