Joan M. Phillips, MD, FAAP, of West Virginia Honored With National Award for Her Outstanding Work to Prevent Child Maltreatment

The National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds and the American Academy of Pediatrics are pleased to announce Joan M. Phillips, MD, FAAP, a West Virginia pediatrician, as this year’s recipient of the Ray E. Helfer, MD Award. This distinguished award is given to a pediatrician who has demonstrated significant contributions to preventing child abuse before it occurs, and who works closely with a Children’s Trust Fund.

The late Ray Helfer, MD is considered the “father” of children’s trust and prevention funds due to his concept that special funds could be used to ensure that our nation’s children grow up nurtured, safe and free from harm.

Jim McKay, representing the West Virginia Children’s Trust Fund, calls Dr. Phillips, “a compassionate leader, advocate, and champion, who has dedicated her career to preventing child abuse and neglect on many fronts.

“In West Virginia, Dr. Phillips is known as our go-to person in child abuse prevention for her expertise, credibility and leadership. A board-certified pediatrician with more than 30 years of experience serving West Virginia children, Dr. Phillips was the first pediatrician in our state with a Board Certification in Child Abuse Pediatrics.”

In addition to serving as Clinical Director of Children’s Services for Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Women and Children’s Hospital, Dr. Phillips serves as Co-Director for the Child Advocacy Center-Children’s Medicine Center CAMC. The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) provides professional and compassionate care to children and families who have been victims of abuse. The CAC supports and participates in a multidisciplinary model for the evaluation, investigation and treatment of child abuse.

She is most passionate about the need to prevent abuse BEFORE it occurs. She is a valued member of the Advisory Team of Our Babies: Safe and Sound initiative, a statewide educational campaign on infant safe sleep and shaken baby syndrome.
prevention supported through the WV Children’s Trust Fund. Dr. Phillips was involved in each step of the development of the campaign approach including reviewing materials for their accuracy and effectiveness. With her input and leadership the campaign has been very successful and has been replicated by other states including Idaho, Maine, and Oklahoma.

Recently, she has championed implementation of the Period of PURPLE Crying Program in four of the largest birthing hospitals in the state in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics – West Virginia Chapter. Combined, these hospitals serve 7500 births per year, which is more than one third of the births in West Virginia. Dr. Phillips has spearheaded other various statewide child abuse prevention efforts throughout her career. An expert in child sexual abuse, she was one of the first pediatricians to participate in the multidisciplinary team approach in West Virginia. She has been a gubernatorial appointed member of the West Virginia Child Fatality Review Team since 2005. Additionally, she serves on the WV State Team of Drug Endangered Children, and serves as member of numerous non-profit organizations at both the state and local levels. She has also served as Clinical Associate Professor at West Virginia University since 1992, inspiring other pediatric residents to recognize and support child abuse prevention efforts.

Dr. Phillips has held various leadership positions in the WV Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, including serving as Chapter President during 2004-2007. She also established the Project Kidinitiative, a statewide program to improve quality and access to health care, with successful implementation of the Ages and Stages developmental screening and an obesity project.

Dr. Phillips has been recognized with many awards, including the No Greater Legacy Award for Child Advocacy, the US Department of Justice Public Service Award, and the Advocate for Children Award by the Academy of Pediatrics – West Virginia Chapter.

Whether it is making a presentation at Ground Rounds, or speaking with legislators, Dr. Phillips is an unwavering advocate for efforts that support children and their families. She has testified countless times before judges, lawmakers, and the public about the importance of caring for every child in West Virginia. With a career in private pediatric practice spanning 22 years, Dr. Phillips has been actively working to prevent child abuse and neglect since 1992.

Dr. Phillips received her Doctor of Medicine degree from West Virginia University in 1980 and her Bachelor of Arts, Biology, from West Virginia University, Magna Cum Laude, in 1975. She is a parent and a grandparent and is the widow of WV State Trooper William Phillips (whose name is engraved on the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington DC).

Teresa Rafael, Executive Director of the Alliance stated, “Dr. Phillips is a shining example of the power of one pediatrician to create positive change in the lives of thousands of children and their families. We are proud to include her among the recipients of the Ray Helfer, MD Award and to have this opportunity to express appreciation for all that she has given through her dedication and commitment.”