



[www.casa-stpete.org](http://www.casa-stpete.org)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sunstar Paramedics and CASA Form Partnership to Prevent Domestic Violence  
--October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month--**

**Largo, FL** (October 23, 2013) – Sunstar Paramedics and Community Action Stops Abuse (CASA) are joining forces to prevent domestic violence. Details of this new partnership to make domestic violence prevention month a focused year-round initiative will be announced at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup> at CASA's headquarters located at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North in St. Petersburg.

"We must all find the courage to speak out against domestic abuse," said Clearwater survivor and nationally recognized advocate Melissa Dohme, who will speak at the October 30<sup>th</sup> event. "CASA and Sunstar are working together to make the safety of every person in our community a priority, and I'm proud to be a part of that effort."

"Melissa's courage really inspired Sunstar to take these steps to reduce the number of domestic violence emergencies plaguing Pinellas County," explained Rob Smith, Sunstar Paramedics Director of Communications and Public Information Officer.

Stabbed 32 times by her ex-boyfriend and left lying in the road to die, Dohme is one of the most tragic calls Sunstar paramedics Jason Bihlajama and Jacqueline Velaquez, who were on the scene that night, have ever encountered.

Today, Melissa is thriving as a nursing student and volunteer advisor to Sunstar Paramedics in their work with CASA to raise awareness surrounding the key warning signs of domestic abuse.

"We want Pinellas County residents to know if they see something, they must say

something,” said Dohme. “The authorities are here to help. It’s everyone’s job to look out for our neighbors, friends and coworkers so that we can put an end to this cycle of abuse.”

Since 1977, CASA has provided refuge, crisis intervention, advocacy, professional training and community outreach to Tampa Bay area victims of domestic violence.

CASA is delighted that Sunstar is stepping forward, as it takes a whole community to stop domestic violence,” emphasizes Linda Osmundson, Executive Director.

In 2012, there were over 6,000 reported cases of domestic violence in Pinellas County. Domestic violence does not discriminate. It cuts across socioeconomic boundaries, age groups, genders and cultures. Fearing retaliatory abuse, victims of domestic violence often do not report the crimes committed against them making prevention a communitywide effort.

### **About CASA**

CASA’s vision is a community without domestic violence so that home is a safe place. CASA’s mission is to raise our voices against violence through advocacy, empowerment, and social change. CASA staff members understand the courage it takes to disclose abuse, and they work with the community to build a network of support for survivors and their children. For more information about CASA, visit [www.casa-stpete.org](http://www.casa-stpete.org).

### **About Sunstar Paramedics**

Sunstar Paramedics provides compassionate quality care and service built around the needs of the patients and communities we serve through effective partnerships. Through its contract with Pinellas County, Sunstar supports and partners with the county’s 18 fire agencies and 62 Advanced Life Support Units to provide all emergency and non-emergency ambulance transportation services and all regional neonatal and pediatric critical care transport services. Sunstar is also the primary ambulance service provider for All Children’s Hospital. Sunstar’s professionals work day and night to ensure that the people of Pinellas County always receive the highest quality of patient care. For more information about Sunstar Paramedics, visit [www.sunstarems.com](http://www.sunstarems.com).

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