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Dear Friends,

2009 has been a busy, productive, and rewarding year for SWAN. In February, we moved our office to New York City and shifted focus, transforming SWAN into a groundbreaking human rights organization that provides advocacy and direct services for servicewomen and women veterans.

Thanks to a fierce grant-writing and fundraising campaign, SWAN's budget has grown eight-fold this year. We hired seven new staff members (six of them women veterans), launched a brand new website, developed empowering and innovative community programs for women veterans, and plunged into the work of educating policymakers and the public about the pressing human rights issues that affect military women. SWAN's ability to provide military women with gender-specific services using a comprehensive, compassionate and nonjudgmental approach, continues to set us apart and take us forward.

Please share in our some of our accomplishments from this year, as detailed below. As we prepare for another exciting year, we are grateful for your continued support.

Yours in service,

Anu Bhagwati  
SWAN Executive Director

**Policy Work**

SWAN has fearlessly addressed the gender disparities in



treatment by the Pentagon and Department of Veteran's Affairs, influencing policy reform at both the local and national levels. In 2009, SWAN staff members testified several times on women veterans' issues before the U.S. Congress, the NY State Assembly, and the NY City Council.



Members of Congress sought SWAN's expertise and advice on issues related to both servicewomen and women veterans, including Military Sexual Trauma, disability claims for women, homelessness, readjustment issues for combat veterans, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and the reproductive rights of military women. SWAN has also provided key consultation on legal and policy protections for military women to other major non-profits, such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch. SWAN will continue to advocate for equal opportunities for all communities of military women, so that no veteran is left behind.

**Homeless Women Veterans:** Funded by a contract from the Department of Labor/Women's Bureau, SWAN conducted discussion groups with homeless women veterans and service providers in New York City, prompting an invitation to present our findings at the VA's 2009 Homeless Veterans conference in Washington DC.

**Military Sexual Trauma Lawsuit:** SWAN has provided consultation and testimony to the Burke O'Neill law firm, which is developing a class action lawsuit against the Department of Defense to reform the culture that permits daily sexual assault and harassment of uniformed personnel.

### **Peer Support Hotline**

SWAN has provided direct peer or legal support this year to more than fifty servicewomen and veterans, including victims of harassment, abuse, unjust demotion and discharge, both overseas and at home. Staffed by women veterans themselves, SWAN's peer support hotline provides military women and their families with constructive guidance and support, as well as counseling and legal referrals in their local communities. Our Veterans Intake Specialist follows up with clients to make sure they have the support they need during difficult times: To speak to a caseworker, call 646-602-5621, or e-mail [peersupport@servicewomen.org](mailto:peersupport@servicewomen.org).



### **Community Development Programs**

SWAN community development programs are conceived, led, and staffed by women veterans, with two purposes: to heal women veterans through creative workshops and activities; and to offer trainings to women veterans so that they can become leaders and mentors in their own communities.

### **A Sample of SWAN's Community Programs:**

[Yoga For Veterans](#), a free yoga class for veterans, their families and veterans' providers in New York City, continues into its second successful year. This groundbreaking workshop provides mentorship to numerous other teachers of alternative therapies for wounded and disabled veterans nationwide.

SWAN established a successful "stand-down" for homeless veterans in Merced, California, offering services, food and clothing to hundreds of local homeless veterans.

SWAN has just partnered with the Manhattan Land Trust to provide weekly community gardening workshops to homeless women veterans and their children in NYC. Participants will receive training in gardening, nutrition, and culinary skills. The project will launch in January 2010 at the Carver Community Garden in East Harlem.



### **Media**

SWAN has been the subject of dozens of interviews this year in print, television, radio, and internet media outlets, including CNN, NPR, and the Associated Press, as well as several documentary film productions. SWAN staff has also generated several op-eds and letters to editors, including work that has been featured in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Huffington Post, and the Clearinghouse Review Journal of Poverty Law and Policy.

*SWAN thanks you for your generous support and wishes you healthy and happy holidays. We look forward to an exciting and productive New Year!*

