

For Immediate Release September 30, 2019
Contact: Jeremy Rathke, Development & Communications Director
Cell: 512.415.7852 Email: Jrathke@TexasAdvocacyProject.org

2019 Black & White Ball Supported by Accenture

Honorees: State Representative John M. Zerwas, M.D., Accenture, and Danielle- a Survivor

AUSTIN, TX – Texas Advocacy Project is hosting the Black & White Ball presented by Accenture, at the JW Marriott Austin on Saturday, October 26th at 7 p.m. At the Black & White Ball TAP honors community leaders who embody their mission to prevent domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking throughout Texas through free legal services, access to the justice system, and education.

“It has always been my belief that it is each individual's responsibility to aid others when they are vulnerable. That can come in many forms and through many organizations, with Texas Advocacy Project standing out as a passionate advocate for those suffering from domestic abuse, dating violence and stalking,” said Jeannette Spinelli on her decision to serve as Chair of the 2019 Ball.

The Courage Award recognizes a survivor's path to safety. This year the honors go to Danielle, a survivor whose journey illustrates the power that legal solutions have in ending unimaginable violence. Danielle knew she had to leave her husband when years of controlling behavior escalated into abuse happening in front of their children. When he suspected she was going to leave, he acted fast to hire an attorney to use the court system against her. She said, “I had no one. No attorney. No money to hire one. No one to stand up for me. He took my children. I was at war with him and the system. I battled and fought to get them back. At times it seemed impossible, he had used all of his strength to charm and manipulate people- even a judge- into believing he was a good man. They were fooled.” Eventually she found TAP, and engaged in a long custody battle. At the conclusion the judge handed down the court orders she needed – a divorce, a protective order, and custody of her kids.

The Generosity of Spirit Award honors individuals who have had a significant impact on the Project either through volunteerism, funding, or as a major contributor to programming. For more than a decade, the team at Accenture has been deeply involved in volunteerism at Texas Advocacy Project. A leading global professional services company with an office of more than 3,000 people in Austin, Accenture's vision is to improve the way the world works and lives, and they live this vision by making a difference in their communities each day. Since 2006, they provided not only critical financial support, but also teams of volunteers for the Black & White Ball, Handbags for Hope, Backpacks for Hope, and Teen Ambassadors of Hope campaigns. For over 13 years, Accenture has dedicated their own time, talent, and treasure and had immeasurable impact on the organization.

The Vision Award is presented to State Representative John M. Zerwas, M.D., a committed leader who proudly served the citizens of Texas House District 28 for seven legislative terms. While leading the budgeting process, Zerwas championed for the rights of sexual assault survivors and children by acknowledging the need for funding to support non-profit organizations. He was one of the few physicians at the legislature and often called upon his experience to understand the needs of survivors. A momentous example was during the 86th Session, when he authored HB 1 that earmarked \$7.5 million to eliminate wait lists at rape crisis centers and to require the state to develop a plan to examine sexual assault investigation and prosecution practices in Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso.

“When our community comes together – across business, government and nonprofit sectors – we can make a big impact in the lives of our neighbors in need,” said Heather Bellino, executive director, Texas Advocacy Project. “We're grateful for all of our individual and organization volunteers and supporters,

including Accenture, our title sponsor of more than 10 years, in uniting against domestic abuse and building stronger communities and families for a better Texas.”

2019 premium sponsors of the Black & White Ball include Accenture, Ranger Excavating, Texas Trucking Company, Inc., Shelia & Lewis Nichols, Cantilo & Bennett, L.L.P., The Piazza Center for Plastic Surgery & Advanced Skin Care, and Erika & Patrick Berger. Select sponsorships are available at www.TexasAdvocacyProject.org/events.

About Texas Advocacy Project, Inc.

The mission of Texas Advocacy Project is to prevent domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking throughout Texas through FREE legal services, access to the justice system, and education. In 2018, The Project provided legal services in 4,313 cases where the clients were aged 8 to 87 years old. All told we served over 10,000 Texans in 182 counties. If you or someone you know needs help, call 800-374-HOPE.

###