**Safe Alliance Domestic Violence Shelter Ready for Clients**

**Charlotte** – Safe Alliance (formerly United Family Services) announces that construction of the Clyde & Ethel Dickson Domestic Violence Shelter for Women and Children is complete – and that this life-saving facility will open soon. A ceremony to celebrate this milestone was held today (12/13/2012).

Utilizing a confidential and safety-driven process, Safe Alliance will soon begin accepting clients into our new 80-bed, 40,000-square foot facility that has been constructed to provide hope and healing for people in crisis.

For those working to end domestic violence in our community, it is a dream come true. For victims and survivors of domestic violence, our shelter is a source of empowerment and a place where they can transition toward self-sufficiency.

“Domestic violence is a far greater issue in our community than most people realize,” said Safe Alliance President & CEO Phil Kline. “One in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. And that is too many. This shelter responds to that reality. Up to this point we had to turn hundreds of women away annually because we did not have the space. Now we are in a much better place to help women and children build safe and healthy relationships.”

Our “old” shelter, which has served the community since 1979, had only 29 beds. Shelter stays were limited to 30-days in most cases. One month is rarely enough time to shape a new life free from violence.

“The construction of our new shelter has been very much a community effort,” said Safe Alliance Chief Advancement Officer Karen Parker. “We have received incredible support from donors, patrons, businesses, the faith community, volunteers and other social service agencies that we partner with to design and build this new facility. Most of all, we wanted to create a shelter that responded to the needs of our clients. Now, families in crisis will have the time to recover from their physical and emotional abuse. We want to help victims become survivors.”

Our new shelter space includes: 10 emergency units and 19 apartment-style units, counseling rooms, conference rooms, kitchen/dining room, children’s spaces, donation room, health clinic, laundry and job training center.

“Sometimes victims of domestic violence have to choose homelessness to escape their violent home lives,” said Kelly Coyne, Safe Alliance Director of Residential Services. “Our building is now a place where a woman can look at her child and say this is where we are going to be safe and where we are going to start our life over. We want this shelter to be a warm and welcoming place where clients are treated with the dignity they deserve.”

Lissette Torres is a domestic violence survivor who has toured our new shelter.

"I believe that the shelter offers hope for many in the community including: victims, survivors, as well as family members, who often times can't take the victims into their homes,” said Lissette. “The shelter will also provide a safe haven where victims will be empowered to regain their dignity; take control of their lives; and make their own decisions."

Safe Alliance supports victims of domestic and sexual violence, and child abuse and helps people build safe, healthy relationships. We do this through a continuum of shelter, counseling, legal and advocacy services serving over 20,000 people a year in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Union and south Iredell counties while reaching 20,000 more through advocacy and education.

**Media Contact: Bill Coy (****Bill.Coy@safealliance.org****)**

 **704 367 2707**