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West Virginia First Lady to Serve as Spokesperson for National Emergency Planning Drill

West Virginia First Lady, Gayle Manchin, joins the Safe America Foundation as spokesperson for the second annual 9/11 Drill Down For Safety, to raise awareness on the need for emergency preparedness



(L to R) Safe America Foundation President Len Pagano; West Virginia First Lady Gayle Manchin; and Volunteer West Virginia Chair and West Virginia Business Volunteer Council Co-Chair Sam Cipoletti.

Marietta, GA and Charleston, WV – West Virginia First Lady Gayle Manchin announced today that she will participate in the Safe America Foundation’s *9/11 Drill Down for Safety* national preparedness drill. Mrs. Manchin has agreed to serve as a special spokesperson for the emergency drill to promote the planning and practicing of preparedness drills with her fellow West Virginians. The First Lady has also agreed to help Safe America promote the program with other First Spouses from around the nation.

Safe America launched the *Drill Down* in 2009. Its purpose is to promote the planning and execution of emergency preparedness drills and to create a “culture of preparedness.” Last year, over 400,000 American families, businesses, public institutions and NGOs participated in *Drill Down* and

demonstrated their preparedness through drills, exercises, text emergency alerts, building an emergency preparedness kit, and other activities.

“I have lent my support to this effort because I recognize how vital it is to have every family across our state – and across America – become more self-reliant,” Mrs. Manchin said. “Having people practice what they would do in an emergency – conducting a text ‘drill’ by phone – is a good step in recognizing how to react – and to begin a multi-phased process of having a plan, knowing how to exercise it – and having emergency supplies in place.” Mrs. Manchin, along with Volunteer West Virginia Chair and West Virginia Business Volunteer Council Co-Chair, Sam Cipoletti, will assist the Safe America Foundation’s *Drill Down* in a number of ways including:

- *They will record television public service announcements promoting “Drill Down.” The spots will be distributed within West Virginia and nationwide.*
- *The First Lady will serve as a national spokesperson for “Drill Down” and attend a ‘preview’ event for New York media on June 30, 2010 in New York.*
- *Mrs. Manchin has offered to ‘promote’ Safe America’s ‘9/11 Drill Down for Safety’ with other ‘First Spouses’ at the upcoming meeting of the National Governor’s Association and in an advertisement appearing in USA TODAY.*
- *She also will be leading the “West Virginia First Family Text, Don’t Talk Drill” announcing the program at a statewide kick-off (being planned during halftime of the West Virginia v. Marshall college football game on September 10, 2010).*

“After meeting with First Lady Manchin, I came away very impressed by her commitment to serving as a real voice for safety in West Virginia,” said Safe America President Len Pagano.

“Most impressive was the fact that she didn’t want to be involved in the program unless she could make a true contribution toward making West Virginians and others more prepared to handle emergencies. I think that speaks volumes about the kind of woman she is,” Pagano noted.

Both *Volunteer West Virginia* and the *West Virginia Business Volunteer Council* will spearhead the *Drill Down* rollout with educational programming. They will also hold local West Virginia events aimed at encouraging businesses, communities and individual families to ‘drill’ on September 11, 2010 or during the month of September, which is National Preparedness Month.

“We’re pleased to be leading the nation in bringing the preparedness message to the public,” said West Virginia Business Volunteer Council Co-Chair Sam Cipoletti. “We believe that there is a need to make Americans ‘self-sufficient’ – and it begins with knowing how to send a text message during an emergency and where to rendezvous if you cannot go home immediately after a crisis occurs.”

Cipoletti, who is also the Director of Government Relations for Verizon West Virginia has confirmed that the company will be the official corporate sponsor for all Drill-Down activities in West Virginia.

Cipoletti also noted that additional information will be made available free-of-charge this summer to members of the West Virginia Business Volunteer Council. Online training via webinars will also be provided via Safe America and Volunteer West Virginia.

For further information, contact Mitzi L.M. Vince at (800)-WV-HELPS (1-800-984-3577).

About Safe America Foundation

The Safe America Foundation is a Marietta, Georgia based 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to addressing emerging health and safety issues – at home, work and play. Founded in 1994, the foundation develops educational programs in partnership with the academic, corporate, public and non-profit sectors. For more information, visit www.safeamerica.org or call 770-973-7233. Safe America can also be found on Twitter [@safeamerica](https://twitter.com/safeamerica).

For more information contact Cullen Gossett at (770)-973-SAFE (7233).

About Volunteer West Virginia

Volunteer West Virginia is the state’s Commission for National and Community Service. Established in 1994 to administer the state’s AmeriCorps *State programs, the agency challenges citizens to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism. Volunteer West Virginia now administers the West Virginia Citizen Corps program and the West Virginia Business Volunteer Council in addition to AmeriCorps *State. For more information, visit www.volunteerwv.org or call (800) WV-HELPS. Volunteer West Virginia can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.

About West Virginia Business Volunteer Council

The West Virginia Business Volunteer Council (WVBVC) is a program of Volunteer West Virginia, the state’s Commission for National and Community Service. The WVBVC is a membership organization that encourages, educates, and connects private sector entities that support employee volunteer programs as a business strategy. Members include statewide businesses, professional and business associations, and labor organizations. For more information, visit www.volunteerwv.org and click on the “Business Volunteer Council” link in the left menu or call (800) WV-HELPS.