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Press Release

August 1, 2014

“In Celebration of Seva: Our Community Gathers to Recognize Devoted Service to Humanity”

**United States Attorney Announces Commemorative Program as the Nation Observes
the Second Anniversary of the Hate Crimes Violence at the Sikh Gurdwara in Oak Creek**

United States Attorney James L. Santelle of the Eastern District of Wisconsin announced today that a special commemoration and awards ceremony will be held on Wednesday, August 6, 2014, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Oak Creek Community Center, located at 8580 South Howell Avenue in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. This community gathering, “In Celebration of Seva,” (the Sikh principle of “service”) is among many programs and events locally and nationwide in observance of the second anniversary of the hate crimes violence at the Sikh Gurdwara in Oak Creek in August of 2012.

Among other significant components of the program, members of Wisconsin’s Congressional Delegation will be conferring the United States Attorney General’s State and Local Law Enforcement Congressional Badges of Bravery on Lieutenant Brian Murphy and Officer Savan “Sam” Lenda, both of the Oak Creek Police Department, whose courageous and selfless law enforcement actions ended the violence at the Sikh Gurdwara and saved the lives of congregation members. United States Attorney Santelle anticipates that Senator Ron Johnson, Senator Tammy Baldwin, Congressman Paul Ryan, and Congresswoman Gwen Moore, or their representatives will present the Badges of Bravery and make remarks on the significance of the local, statewide, and national law enforcement actions of two years ago.

The Congressional Badge of Bravery is awarded to a public safety officer who has sustained a physical injury in the line of duty while performing an act of bravery, or if not injured, performed an act of bravery that placed the officer at risk of serious physical injury or death. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. selected Lieutenant Murphy and Officer Lenda for their “extraordinary bravery above and beyond the call of duty,” while also commending the service of numerous other agents, officers, and employees of federal, state, and local law enforcement for their critically important responsive actions.

In addition, United States Attorney Santelle will be conferring Distinguished Public Service Awards on some ten area attorneys who, over the period of the past two years, have provided critically important *pro bono* legal service and counsel to the family members of the victims of the violence. The attorneys who will be recognized specially for their service to the community are Sklkime Abduli, Priya Moti Bhatia, Kelley A. Chenhalls, Laura J. Fernandez, Thomas C. Hochstatter, Gail K. McCarthy, Jennifer L. Nissen, Davorin J. Odracic, Maria T. Ryan, and Jessie Schreier.

The program will also include an encore presentation of “Waking in Oak Creek”—a reflective and inspiring documentary about the responsive care, abiding support, and transcendent spirit of a faith congregation and a harmonious community that rejected hate in favor of humanity. This film was produced by the professional staff of the Working Group/Not in Our Town Initiative, led by Executive Officer and Director Patrice O’Neill, in partnership and association with the United States Department of Justice’s Office of Community Policing Services (COPS).

The Honorable Stephen Scaffidi, Mayor of the City of Oak Creek, Police Chief John Edwards, City of Oak Creek Police Department, and other state and local officials will be speaking about the events of early August of 2012 and about the response of the Oak Creek Community, the State of Wisconsin, and the nation in promoting healing, safety, security, understanding, and growth. Finally, Dr. Kulwant S. Dhaliwal, President of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin, and Dr. Gurcharan S. Grewal, President of the Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, will convey remarks about “seva”—that is, the humanitarian commitment to service to all women and men—and similarly speak about the experiences of the Sikh congregations that they lead.

This ceremony is presented and sponsored by the Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, the Bureau of Justice Assistance of the Office of Justice Programs of the United States Department of Justice, in partnership with the Delegation to the United States Congress from the State of Wisconsin, the City of Oak Creek, the Sikh Community of the State of Wisconsin, and the Working Group/Not in Our Town Initiative. United States Attorney Santelle acknowledges and expresses appreciation to the leadership and the community of the City of Oak Creek for their support and assistance in organizing and presenting this program.

Members of the media should call Public Information Officer Dean Puschnig at (414) 297-1774 to confirm their attendance.

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For additional information contact:

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