

For Immediate Release
March 28, 2007

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Board of Directors Gives Executive Director a Time to Exhale...

Exhale takes the lead and fosters a non-profit culture where leaders can thrive.

Oakland, CA –

In a bold effort to incorporate its core values into every aspect of its operation, Oakland-based Exhale, a 5 year-old national organization committed to post-abortion well-being, has awarded its founding Executive Director, Aspen Baker, a three-month paid sabbatical starting in April, 2007. The board of directors awarded the sabbatical to Ms. Baker in November 2006 as a reward for her years of service to Exhale and as a strategy for ensuring Exhale's long-term viability and sustainability.

Sabbaticals in the non-profit sector are typically awarded to individuals that have been in the same leadership position for five or more years. Sabbaticals can keep burnout, stress and fatigue at bay, while giving leaders the time necessary to think and reflect so they can keep their organizations moving forward and to refuel for the leadership challenges ahead.

"Exhale was founded to promote emotional well-being, so it is important that we adopt policies that reflect this key component of our mission and work," says the President of Exhale's Board of Directors, Jennifer Rudy. *"Aspen Baker has been incredibly effective as the leader of Exhale and the board of directors is proud to reward her work and commitment to the organization with a sabbatical. We also hope that this historic event in Exhale's history serves as an inspiration to other non-profit boards to let them know that it's not only ok, but good practice, to give their organizational leaders a time to rest and rejuvenate after many years of service,"* says Rudy.

Effective non-profit leaders, especially executive directors, are vital, scarce resources for the communities that they serve and represent. Unfortunately, leaders with a lot of potential and promise often leave the profession after only a few years because of burnout and lack of support. This trend has disrupted the work of many organizations and is an overall challenge to the non-profit sector. Sabbaticals are a great way for organizations to retain leaders as well as learn how to effectively manage transition. *"The sabbatical is an important strategy for developing the long-term viability of Exhale because it promotes shared responsibility and fosters accountability throughout every level of the organization,"* says Rudy. *"Not only does the board believe the sabbatical will be good for supporting Ms. Baker's leadership, we believe it is a great tool for building Exhale's capacity to be effective in the long-term."*

Under Ms. Baker's leadership, Exhale has grown from a volunteer-run organization operating a regional talkline to a national organization with several programs designed to support women who have had abortions and foster a social climate that does the same. Ms. Baker will be on sabbatical for the months of April, May and June and will be enjoying the chance to travel and spend time with her family.