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**CEREMONY TO AWARD THE SPRING 2016 “CYCLE FOR CHANGE”
SCHOLARSHIPS TO SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

On Friday, April 8, 2016, at 11 a.m., El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal and Villa Maria shelter director Linda Velarde will award five El Paso residents “Cycle for Change” scholarships for the Spring 2016 semester. The event will take place at the Villa Maria shelter, 920 S. Oregon.

All the scholarship recipients are survivors of domestic violence who are fighting to overcome obstacles to succeed in life. The funds can be used to pursue academic goals, or to fulfil needs such as therapeutic services, child care, or any other needs that might become an obstacle for the survivor of violence to move forward with their life and increase their self-esteem.

The money for the scholarships comes from the annual cycling tour “*Cycle for Change: From Surviving to Thriving*,” which was held on October 18, 2015, at Gallegos Park. The event was created with the purpose of raising funds to help survivors to move beyond breaking the cycle of domestic violence, to thriving as a survivor of the social disease. More than 230 cyclists from the region participated in last year’s event.

“As an organization that daily helps dozens of victims of domestic violence, it is disheartening to see that many of them return to their abusive relationships within days of a violent episode. This happens because the victims don’t have the tools or skills to survive on their own and to break the cycle of violence,” said El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal

“We are happy that these scholarships will help some of those victims to move forward with their lives and break away from the cycle of violence,” Bernal concluded.

The scholarship program is open to any primary survivor of a domestic violence relationship who resides in El Paso County, regardless of their legal status in this country.

WHO: County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal, Villa Maria Director Linda Velarde and survivors of domestic violence

WHAT: “Cycle for Change” Scholarship Awards Ceremony

WHEN: Friday April 8, 2016, at 11:00 a.m.

WHERE: Villa Maria Shelter, 920 S. Oregon

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About Villa Maria: Villa Maria is a local shelter for homeless women who are survivors of domestic violence located in the Segundo Barrio, 920 S. Oregon.