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For Immediate Release

Kitty Westin, National Leader in Eating Disorders Advocacy, Retires from Eating Disorders Coalition Board of Directors

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 3, 2018) — On Monday, January 1, 2018, Kitty Westin, national eating disorder activist and nearly two-decade Board Member of the Eating Disorders Coalition, officially retired.

Westin first became an outspoken advocate for those with eating disorders after her 21-year-old daughter, Anna Westin, lost her life from anorexia nervosa in 2000, after five years of struggling with the illness. Since then, Westin has spoken to millions of people about eating disorders through personal appearances and the media. She frequently gives invited presentations at professional conferences across the United States and internationally to help train clinicians and health researchers on the importance of understanding the unique perspectives of patients and families in delivering high quality healthcare treatment for recovery. She is most known as a tireless advocate and is often credited as the founder of the modern eating disorders advocacy movement.



“For everyone who has had the good fortune to have met Kitty Westin, all agree she is among the kindest, most compassionate, and humblest people we will ever know. But make no mistake: She is a powerhouse when it comes to public policy on eating disorders,” **said S. Bryn Austin, ScD, EDC President.** “She inspired a generation of advocates and showed the policy world that the eating disorders community was no longer going to take ‘No’ for an answer. As Gloria Steinem was to the women’s movement and Rachel Carson was to the environmentalists, Kitty is the mother of our movement and we will be forever touched by her courage and vision.”

Westin joined the Eating Disorders Coalition in 2000, beginning her advocacy with Congress to advance the federal recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority and a serious mental illness. Her work led her to negotiations on mental health parity, leadership at countless Capitol Hill Advocacy Days, and on December 13, 2016, the passage of the Anna Westin Act of 2015, named in honor of her late daughter and signed into law within the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255). To learn more about Anna’s story, Netsmart’s EveryDayMatters created a short video that can be [viewed here](#).

The 21st Century Cures Act included key provisions from the bipartisan, bicameral Anna Westin Act of 2015 (S. 1865 / H.R. 2515) to increase access to eating disorder treatment health insurance coverage, train health professionals such as doctors and nurses to early identify eating disorders, and enhance information and resources to help early identification of eating disorders by the public.

“In Minnesota and across the nation, Kitty Westin has been on the front lines in the fight for health parity for people with eating disorders. She took the unspeakable heartache of losing her daughter Anna and channeled it into an effort that has improved and saved the lives of countless people throughout the country,” **said Senator Amy Klobuchar [D-MN]**. “Together we fought to pass the bipartisan Anna Westin Act through Congress in tribute to Anna. Because of Kitty’s hope, strength, and courage, so many people with eating disorders will be able to get the treatment they need to recover and thrive.”

After years as a practicing psychologist, Westin founded and led the Anna Westin Foundation, merging with the Emily Program Foundation in 2008. She held leadership roles as the past President and member of the board of directors of The Emily Program Foundation, the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action, and a former member of the Minnesota Governor’s Advisory Council on Mental Health and the Minnesota Mental Health Legislative Network.

“As I think about stepping out of my leadership role at the EDC and reflect on what the Coalition has meant to me, I realize that the EDC has played a major role in my recovery from the tragic death of my daughter,” **said Kitty Westin**. “When I joined the EDC Board in September 2000, I was still in shock over Anna’s death from an eating disorder. I did not know how to live without her or how to move forward with my life. When I learned about the EDC and its mission to address eating disorders at the Federal level, I found my purpose. My purpose became my passion to fight eating disorders. I hoped that my willingness to tell Anna’s story would provide a catalyst for change and that it would bring recognition that eating disorders are life threatening illnesses that affected millions of Americans. Over the years I have met thousands of people from across the United States who were passionate about fighting eating disorders, I have met with dozens of members of Congress and staff, I have worked with an incredible Board and the extremely talented EDC staff and I consider each of them part of my ‘support network.’ All of these people are the ‘ripples of hope’ that helped me heal and provide hope to millions of Americans affected by eating disorders. I fully intend to continue to support the efforts of the EDC and to be an advocate for those affected by eating disorders, but it feels like a good time to step aside and allow other (younger) leaders to step forward and lead the EDC as we face the next challenges in the fight against eating disorders. I am extremely grateful that the EDC gave me a voice and a platform to tell Anna’s story and transform the horror of her death into something positive.”

Westin plans to spend her retirement with her family and new grandchildren, and she plans to continue attending the Eating Disorders Coalition’s Capitol Hill Advocacy Days. The Eating Disorders Coalition thanks Westin for her years of dedication to improving the lives of those affected by eating disorders and wishes her well in her retirement.

The Eating Disorders Coalition is a Washington, D.C.-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of treatment providers, advocacy organizations and entities, parents of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. Additional resources can also be found at www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org. ###