



Newsletter

# FAMILY SUPPORT C E N T E R

Fall 2007

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**Assistant Administrator**  
Sue Kittelson

**Office Manager**  
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**Resource Development  
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Kelsey Burton

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Angie Byczynski & Sue Erickson

**Domestic Abuse Children's  
Advocate**  
Tessa Darley

**Sexual Assault Victim  
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Lisa Fellenz & Alison Drain

**Parent Services Provider**  
Marilyn Lemke

**Prevention Coordinator**  
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**Prevention Educators**  
Jan Silloway & Kelsey Burton

**Safe Exchange Coordinator**  
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**UWEC Center for Awareness  
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## October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is nationally recognized as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive tactics that are used to gain and maintain power and control in an ongoing, familiar relationship.

This year Family Support Center has planned a variety of events to raise awareness about domestic violence. The Family Support Center will be building community awareness by distributing domestic violence information to local area businesses, sending out thank you cards to agencies that support our mission, handing out book marks that display 50 ways to end domestic violence, providing a movie night for victims of domestic violence, having

survivors of past abuse put together care packages for victims in shelter, having survivors of past abuse contribute to the newsletter by sharing their experiences, and having survivors put together ribbons cards with purple ribbons and inspirational messages for victims.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a reminder that domestic violence happens all year and affects not only the victims and their families, but the entire community. Use this time to advocate for the end of domestic violence. During the month of October, please wear a purple ribbon to show your support for victims/survivors of domestic violence.

*-Kelsey Burton, Resource Development Coordinator/Prevention Educator*

## Domestic Abuse Program Director Retires

After 8 years as Domestic Abuse Program Director of the Family Support Center, Ellen Kiefer retired in June. Ellen served as a positive force for the agency with her excellent judgment, kind nature, and infectious laugh.

She left a permanent positive mark and truly made a difference to the agency and to her clients. She will be greatly missed. We would like to thank Ellen for her years of dedication to the Family Support Center.

## "One in Four" to Visit UWEC

The "One in Four" National Peer Education Team is an all male group that travels across the U.S. to lower men's likelihood of raping. They educate men on college campuses, in high schools, and in communities by using the most effective rape prevention program ever evaluated.

This group approaches men as part of the solution, not part of the problem. They will be on the Eau Claire campus educating men about how to help sexual assault survivors through increased empathy and understanding, as well as teaching them new ways to prevent sexual assault.

## Domestic Violence Homicides: *Director's Corner*



*Segal*

Domestic violence is all too common and takes many forms. The most serious is homicide. Women in domestic violence situations are more likely to be killed when they have left the rela-

tionship. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is a national study, the rate of domestic violence homicides by husbands was 25 times higher when women were separated from their husbands than when married and cohabiting.<sup>1</sup> This clearly corroborates the reason many women do not leave their abusers – they are afraid for their lives.

Some victims, who have a history of being battered and threatened with death engage in violence to defend themselves. Research has revealed that self-defense to escape or protect a victim from her abuser's violence was the most frequently reported motivation for women's use of violence.<sup>2</sup>

A small number of victims respond to the violence they have suffered by retaliating against their abuser at a later time, when they are not under direct attack. Whether they have used self-defense in the midst of violence, or retaliated later on, these victims responded to the abuse they have suffered and to real threats in their lives.

Every year the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) prepares a Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report. Because of the extensive amount of research which goes into this report, the report for a given year is usually issued two years after the year the homicides occurred. WCADV has issued preliminary data for domestic violence homicides committed in 2005. Researchers are still completing their work and several additional homicides are being investigated. At this point, this is what we know about domestic violence homicides in 2005 in Wisconsin:

- There were 36 victims of domestic violence homicides. Five of these also involved a suicide after the homicide resulting in a total of 41 deaths. There were a total of 30 incidents. Some incidents involved the killing of more than one person.
- 24 of the perpetrators were male; 6 were female.
- Shooting was the most common method of killing (20), followed by stabbing (7), strangulation (3), beating (3), and other (3).

An intimate relationship that ends in homicide clearly illustrates the most disastrous possible end. Not only have the victims' lives ended, the lives of those around them have sometimes ended as well. The survivors' lives are forever changed.

<sup>1</sup>2003 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report

<sup>2</sup>2003 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report

*-Geri Segal, Executive Director*

## What about the Kids?

In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are at high risk for suffering physical abuse themselves. Regardless of whether children are physically abused, the emotional effects of witnessing domestic violence are just as damaging. Studies suggest that each year between 3.3 and 10 million children in the United States are exposed to domestic violence in their homes.

- Men who as children were exposed to their parents' domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own wives as sons of nonviolent parents.

- Many children in homes where domestic violence occurs have difficulties in school, including problems with concentration, poor academic performance, difficulty with peer interactions, and more absences from school.

- Young children who had been exposed to violence suffered symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as bed-wetting or nightmares, and were at greater risk than their peers of having allergies, asthma, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and flu.

- Children exposed are also more likely to exhibit behavioral and physical health problems including depression, anxiety, and violence towards peers.

As caring adults we must ask the tough questions to insure each child's safety. What is really going on in this child's life, and how can I help this family find support? By collaborating with Family Support Center we can achieve a shared goal of freeing victims and working to prevent future violence in our community.

*-Tessa Darley, Domestic Abuse Children's Advocate*

## Why Do They Stay?

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and I thought I would address a prominent question that continues to emerge in our community. One of the most frequently asked questions is:

“Why do women stay in abusive relationships?” The answer depends on whom you ask. An abuser may indicate that the victim deserved the abuse or may blame the victim for the abuse. A counselor may focus on patterns of behaviors or examine underlying issues. An advocate may explore the dynamics of power and control in the relationship and process the danger a woman may suffer if she decides to leave. You will get a different answer from each victim, but some common fears and themes emerge. I asked survivors of domestic violence why they stayed in their abusive relationships. The following quotes provide insight into why women stay:

“I stayed because I was afraid to leave. Who would believe me? How would I support myself? How could I keep my children safe? Who else would ever want me? How could I ever have a normal life? Leaving helped me realize that the life I had was not normal and my children will always carry scars for the time I stayed.”

“I stayed with my husband because financially and emotionally I believed that I could not make it on my own. I believed his “reality” and found myself lost in that reality. My life was as chaotic as his life, and I did not know how to make a move without being hurt.”

“He always said let’s try one more time or let’s try one more thing... example; let’s go to counseling. It

was so hard doing everything by myself...taking care of the children, the house, the bills, everything. Also, I was worried my children would think that it was my fault for leaving their father.”

“In the beginning, I thought he would change, or I could change him. In the middle: I stayed because of our children, we were settled in our life, once in a while I saw a glimpse of the person I wanted him to be or had hoped he would become. So I would hold on for another week, month, which suddenly turned into years. At the end: my self esteem was so low that whatever courage I had was squashed.”

“I stayed for financial reasons, the children, and fear for my physical safety if I left and he found me. I really thought I could change him, and I had very low self esteem. My partner told me over and over again that I would never find anyone else. I felt stupid for getting myself into the situation and felt alone and trapped.”

“One of the reasons I stayed was because my partner kept telling me that I was not good and that I would never be any good for anyone else. [He said] I was not a good mother and he was the only one for me and that I could never make it on my own. He kept the fear in me about not living another day if I left. That he would find me and on my grave-stone it would read “she had a piece of paper to protect her.”

“I stayed because of financial reasons, and I was afraid to make it on my own. He continually threatened to kill me if I tried to leave and the children needed me alive. I was hopeful he could change. I was very close to his family

and did not have much of an outside support system. I did not want to go through the hell of a divorce.”

“The teachings of my religion were the primary reason I stayed. These teachings made it very easy for my spouse to brainwash me into having no self confidence. I lived in fear; I had no job, no money, and no way to earn money. How would I take care of my children and myself in the 1960’s and 1970’s as there were no resources for victims [then]? There was the unspoken rule from my parents that once I was out of the house I was not welcome back. I made my bed and now I needed to lay in it. Growing up in an abusive home made it easy to transition into an abusive relationship.”

Domestic violence is everyone’s business. It affects all of us. Each individual has a role to play in efforts to stop domestic violence. Action can be as simple as contributing money or needed items to a local abuse center, volunteering time to a program that aids victims of abuse, talking to teens about relationship violence, offering support to abused individuals, or posting awareness materials in public places.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I hope you will encourage people to join efforts to reduce domestic violence in our community. The Family Support Center provides temporary shelter for domestic abuse victims and their children, 24-hour crisis counseling at 1-800-400-7020, one on one counseling, assistance with restraining orders and legal advocacy, and support groups for women and children. All services are free and confidential.

*-Angie Byczynski, Domestic Abuse Advocate*

**Family Support Center would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Way for supporting us throughout the years. The United Way has been integral in the continuation of some of Family Support Center’s programs.**



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## On-Going Groups

### **New Beginnings Women's Group. Every Monday, 5:30-7:15 p.m.**

An open group for those who have experienced domestic abuse. Members are encouraged to sign up their children for the Kids' Group which takes place at the same time. For more information please call 723-1138, and ask for Angie B. New members must contact the coordinator prior to joining.

*All programs and services are offered free of charge. Please call 723-1138 for more information.*

### **Kids' Group. Every Monday,**

**5:30-7:15 p.m.** Open to children who have witnessed or experienced domestic violence in their family. Topics include protective behaviors, anger management, conflict resolution, & feelings. New members must contact the coordinator prior to joining. Call 723-1138, and ask for Tessa.

## Wish List...

**We are in need of the following items. ANYTHING you can donate would be gratefully appreciated. These donations are for client use. Please call 715-723-1138 if you can help.**

- Local gas station gift certificates
- Local grocery store gift certificates
- Shampoos, conditioners, deodorant, feminine products
- Laundry soap
- Dishwashing soap
- Paper towels
- Diapers, especially sizes 3, 4, and 5
- Plastic forks and spoons
- Snack foods, soda, crystal light, and tea