

YWCA Calls for St. Joseph County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

At least 4 people have died in St. Joseph County in the past year from domestic violence—an appalling fact that has prompted the YWCA to take action and call for St. Joseph County officials to form a fatality review team. The team would review domestic violence deaths in the county and try to prevent future deaths.

The Indiana legislature passed a law in 2003 to allow cities and counties around the state to create such teams but so far only four communities have set them up. The YWCA's call for action came 3 days after the murder of 21 year old Cherlyn Reyes, allegedly at the hands of her longtime abusive boyfriend.

YWCA Executive Director Linda Baechle will speak before the St. Joseph County Council at the November meeting about forming St. Joseph County's fatality review team.

Who's on the Team?

Under Indiana law a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team must include a:

- domestic violence survivor
- domestic violence direct service provider agency
- law enforcement representative
- prosecuting attorney or designee
- coroner or forensic pathology expert
- judge who hears civil or criminal cases
- employee of the state Department of Child Services.

Advocating for Abuse Victims

For over 6 years volunteers with the YWCA's *CourtWatch* program have kept a watchful eye over the St. Joseph County Courts. Their observations have helped make the local courts more responsive to the needs of abuse victims and the community as a whole. Now, thanks to a grant from the Department of Justice, *CourtWatch* will soon be expanded to cover more cases.

"We'll be able to at least double the amount of court monitoring we're currently doing," said YWCA Legal Advocate Deb Drummond. Drummond will oversee the 24 month project. Currently, misdemeanor domestic violence cases as well as civil protective order hearings are monitored. The grant means additional monitors can be trained by the YWCA and begin monitoring felony domestic violence and rape cases as well as cases involving child abuse.

With several St. Joseph County judges by her side YWCA Executive Director Linda Baechle announced the expansion project inside Circuit Court Judge Michael Gotsch's courtroom. The courtroom is one of 12 in the county that will be equipped with sound amplification equipment as part of the project. Currently, victims are frequently unable to hear proceedings due to a lack of amplification, and jurors have difficulty hearing testimony from children. The 24-month project will culminate in an



analysis by a team of legal experts and a written report to the community.

"We are very grateful to Congressman Joe Donnelly and his staff, Baechle said. "Without their help the YWCA could not have secured the funding from the Department of Justice to make this project possible," said Baechle.

Want to know more about CourtWatch and how you can get involved? Contact YWCA Legal Advocate Deb Drummond at 233-9491 or ddrummond@ywcascj.org

Interested in becoming a YW Women of Vision? Contact Development Director Peggy King at 233-9491 or pking@ywcascj.org

YWCA Women of Vision

YWCA Women of Vision gathered at the downtown offices of the University of Notre Dame to get a sneak peek at the YWCA's CourtWatch expansion project. Legal Advocate Deb Drummond briefed the women on the project the night before



it was announced to the public. Thanks to all the women who joined us for the evening and to downtown Notre Dame for letting us borrow their beautiful space.

Newsletter Spotlight



Raising Awareness

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the YWCA received help from many organizations and individuals to raise awareness about violence against women in our community. A special thank you to the St. Joseph County Public Library for hosting the "Empty Place at



The exhibit featured the stories of 6 local women and men who died as a result of domestic violence and served as a dramatic reminder of the permanent empty place left in the hearts of families scarred by violence.



The busy lobby of the County-City building in downtown South Bend was the scene of another visual display to bring

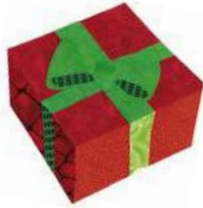
attention to the problem of domestic violence. All those passing through the lobby had a chance to see the *Clothesline Project*. Creating and hanging a shirt on the Clothesline offers local survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault an opportunity to leave behind some of their pain and move to the next phase of their lives. A big thank you to the County Commissioners for hosting the display and for the maintenance staff at the CC building for helping us hang the Clothesline.



The YWCA is very grateful to our friends at the O'Brien Fitness Center in South

Bend. Staff and clients collected boxes and boxes of personal items and toys for the women and children staying at the YWCA Shelter as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We are touched by both the donations and by the staff's dedication to spreading an anti-violence message. A very special thank you to Fitness Supervisor Matt Bellina, Fitness Instructor Patti Smith, Manager Cindy Piech-Miller, Fitness Desk Administrative Assistant Terri Michalski and Payroll Clerk Sandy Linetty.

Celebrating the Holidays at the YWCA



Hard to believe but the holidays are right around the corner and the YWCA is gearing up to make it a happy season for the women and children staying at our shelter.

Each year we rely on the kindness of the community to help provide gifts to our clients. This year it will be an especially big job because of a nearly 20% increase in the number of children staying at the shelter. Please consider giving to the YWCA this holiday season

We have a dedicated corps of volunteers who will gladly wrap any gift you drop off Monday thru Friday or by special arrangement on Saturday.

You can find us at 1102 S. Fellows Street in South Bend. Prefer to make a monetary donation? Please forward your check to the above address or...

Make a donation online at:

www.ywcasjc.org

Keeping in Touch

Would you like to receive the YWCA's quarterly *Our Voice* by email ?

Visit us online at
www.ywcasjc.org
to sign up

Holiday Wish List

Infants & Toddlers: Baby action toys, educational toys, stuffed animals, books, hat, mittens, socks.
Diapers, cribs, pack & plays always needed!

Children 4 to 12: Legos and other building sets, dolls, trucks, cars, educational games, board games, craft projects, books, hats, mittens, socks.

School uniforms for all ages always needed!

Teenagers: Music CDs, DVDs, young ladies toiletry items, hats, scarves, hair accessories, age appropriate art supplies, gift cards, books, book bags, hand held video games.

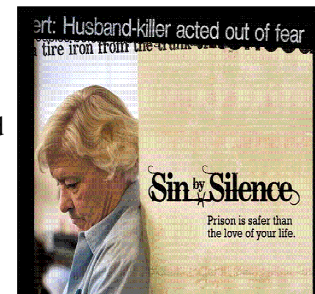
Adult Women: Robes, hats, scarves, books, book bags, gift cards, body lotions, perfume, costume jewelry, watches, day calendars, throws.

It will be most appreciated if all gifts are non-violent in nature and, if possible, delivered to the YWCA by December 14th.

If you have any questions please call Peggy King at 574-233-9491 or email her at pking@ywcasjc.org.

Join us for Sin By Silence Documentary

Sin by Silence is an emotionally packed documentary that examines the stories of women incarcerated for killing their abusive partners. Yet, despite being behind prison walls these women have learned from their past and advocate for a future free from domestic violence. The YWCA and St. Mary's College will host a screening of this powerful film. It's free and open to the public.



Sin by Silence
Wednesday, Nov. 18,
2009
7:00 pm
Vander Vennet Theatre
Saint Mary's College