

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014

On Thursday, July 24, 2014 the SW Board of Directors gathered in Minnesota for a retreat, and as part of our meeting we visited the Women's Correctional Facility at Shakopee, MN where we witnessed the momentum of the mission of SW and the mysterious miracles occurring around the display of the witnesses. One such miracle took place not once but twice in the housing unit of the women's prison. and we'd like to share what happened with you all.

Since 1911, Minnesota has housed all of its female offenders at a facility in Shakopee. In 1986 the 85 offenders in custody were marched across the street from the old "women's reformatory" building to modern correctional facility that is there today. Since that time the facility has grown to over 600 offenders. Offenders at MCF-Shakopee may choose to participate in programing provided by the InnerChange Freedom Initiative. This is a faith-based program funded and operated by Prison Fellowship through a partnership with the corrections department.

Two years ago, the original 27 Silent Witnesses were used to create a program event educating the offenders about domestic violence. When they arrived at the facility, the Restorative Justice Sergeant, James C Church saw that many of the witnesses were damaged and needed a fresh coat of paint in addition to new body bags to protect them from further degeneration. Sgt. Church contacted Lorraine Hart at the Minnesota Women's Consortium, to request permission to paint and restore the silhouette's and make new body bags for them. Lorraine contacted the SW Co-director and it was agreed that the women at the Shakopee prison could refurbish the 27 original witnesses.

During the program at Shakopee, the witnesses were randomly distributed, one to each housing unit, with the exception of one housing unit that was given two witnesses. As the women read the stories on the breastplates of each witness, two of the offenders recognized that the witnesses in their area were their relatives - one was the aunt of an offender and the other the sister of an offender. Once recognized, there was an emotional response that created greater interest in the SW Project at the facility.

Following the SW displays project one offender created a life skills class for women seeking to understand and break the patterns of abuse in their lives. During our visit to the facility, it was reported that 9 women are participating in the group and it shows promise for expanding in the near future.

This heartwarming story has led to an ongoing relationship between the SW Board of Directors and Sgt. James C. Church through the guidance of Renee Falcum-Youngberg, the leader of the Sheila Shawl project that has been tremendously successful creating shawls for the women related to the SW victims and scarfs for the men related to a SW victim. Through a brief conversation with Sgt. Church and the women involved in the SW makeover project, Renee volunteered to teach the women how to knit shawls and scarves for the project. Renee will visit the facility 1-2 times per month to give knitting instruction and visit with the participants. All the yarn has been donated to the project.

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014



As board members, we were deeply touched to see the connection the women of Shakopee found in the witnesses. One woman related that "I wanted to paint everyone by myself", she felt a connection with the victims. Another woman reported that she was working on the grounds crew when the SW project began. With talents as a seamstress, she eagerly participated in cutting and sewing the body bags in the evenings, even making the pattern for other's to use.

The insights and enthusiasm of the women of Shakopee impressed us a great deal. We thank Sgt. Church and all of the women participants for their passionate interest in the project yet more importantly their interest in learning the life skills that will protect them and keep them out of abusive relationships. This is an important reward of the SW mission and vision. We are dedicated to finding programs that will bring healing to all forms of abuse in relationships. The profound impact of the witnesses gives birth to the desire for men and women to find solutions to life-controlling problems and to living well as the best defense against destructive patterns in relationships.

We hope that you'll stay connected to learn about the good work that Silent Witness is doing all over the world...and if you currently host a SW exhibit and would like to share your stories and photos with others, or if you have a program that's working to end domestic violence in your community that you think we should know about, please email your info Nancy Rafi by clicking [HERE](#).

Yours in Peace,

Jacquie Skog, Co-Chair, Silent Witness Initiative Board of Directors

What's Happening on Campus?

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014



COLLEGE CORNER - The Legal Push To Make Campuses Safer

If you turn on your television or open the newspaper, you are most likely bombarded with articles and news snippets regarding violence on college campuses and a variety of legislation both new and old that is being implemented in an effort to keep our campuses safe. You might be confused by the laundry list of new regulations and what they really mean.

Here is a brief overview with some links to help you sort out what this all means:

*Title IX - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities which receive Federal financial assistance. Title IX states that:
No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).*

While many may recall the significance of this legislation as it relates to female athletes, this legislation also protects victims of sexual assault, dating violence, harassment and stalking. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sexual violence in schools and on campus is a pressing civil rights issue: when students suffer sexual assault and harassment, they are deprived of equal access to an education. Title IX is a powerful tool for students who want to combat sexual harassment and sexual assault, including rape, at school and on college campuses (ACLU, 2014).

Additional Resources:

- *US Dept. of Ed (Title IX): www.ed.gov/category/keyword/titleix*
- *ACLU (Title IX & Sexual Violence In Schools): <https://www.aclu.org/womens-rights/title-ix-and-sexual-violence-schools>*
- *Know Your IX: knowyourix.org*
- *Title IX Info: www.titleix.info*

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)- Initially passed in 1994, VAWA created the first U.S. federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence and sexual assault as crimes, and provided federal resources to

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014

encourage community-coordinated responses to combating violence. Its reauthorization in 2000 improved the foundation established by VAWA 1994 by creating a much-needed legal assistance program for victims and by expanding the definition of crime to include dating violence and stalking.

Its subsequent reauthorization in 2005 took a more holistic approach to addressing these crimes and created new programs to meet the emerging needs of communities working to prevent violence. Included in the 2005 reauthorization were new focus areas such as prevention, landmark housing protections for survivors, funding for rape crisis centers, and culturally- and linguistically-specific services. VAWA 2013 will ensure the continuation and improvement of these vital, lifesaving programs and laws (National Network To End Domestic Violence, 2014).

Additional Resources:

- VAWA Fact Sheet:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/vawa_factsheet.pdf
- National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence: 4vawa.org
- VAWA Laws for Abuse Victims: www.womenslaw.org

Not Alone / The White House Report (<https://www.notalone.gov>) - This twenty page document published by the White House outlines steps that colleges need to take to address and remedy sexual assault. Efforts such as campus climate surveys, implementing bystander intervention initiatives and other campus wide prevention strategies. The report also provides directives related to campus policy development and enforcement, and the training of campus officials.

As colleges face the challenges of juggling all of these mandates and work toward redefining their infrastructure to better support students who report incidents of sexual misconduct, the Silent Witness Initiative can be a powerful, proactive tool for raising awareness and engaging students in education about relationship violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other forms of violence. SWI, opens the door to conversations about campus resources and how students can establish and maintain healthy relationships.

Tell us how you are using the Silent Witness Initiative on your campus to keep your community safe. Send us your story (please include photos) and we will showcase your campus's efforts in our College Corner.

News from University of MINNESOTA, Crookston

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014



It's so great to see a breath of new energy in the Silent Witness Project! I had heard about the project about six years ago from colleagues on our Twin Cities campus. In the past, we had done a small Clothesline Project Display. I work on a very small campus, but this year I partnered with Student Health (also an office of one) to greatly expand the project. It is similar to one done at neighboring University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. We got t-shirts from both Minnesota and North Dakota for the clothesline project. Additionally, we set a table setting with belongings representing recently killed victims of DV in Minnesota, and we have begun to build our silent witness project. So far, we have seven silent witnesses. They are not completely finished--not all are painted, but I made badges for the victims from Minnesota in 2013 and displayed them. Several students, and my husband and I have done most of the work; we hope to add a dozen or so each year.

I look forward to following your work on this project!

-- Lisa, University of Minnesota Crookston

News From the States

Rhode Island

On October 1st, the Silent Witnesses of Rhode Island will be gathering at Roger Williams University in Bristol, for our annual march to end the silence and we have an exciting announcement to make! We'll be releasing our findings that we've gathered from an extensive study pertaining to domestic violence homicides around the United States over the past 35 years. Broken down with national and state statistics we'll have this information available on our [national website](#) in October so please take the time to check it out and learn what's going on in your state, and around the country.



Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014

International Silent Witness Update

What's been happening in Canada?



In April 2013, there was a dedication ceremony in Quispamsis, New Brunswick for Alice Leadlay's Silent Witness silhouette. The above photo (with Alice's silhouette covered in purple) shows Hon. Marie-Claude Blais, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Minister responsible for Women's Equality speaking at the dedication ceremony.

Ceremony honours Alice Leadlay

To commemorate her life and look for solutions to family violence, over 50 people attended, including family, friends, police, and community service providers. The event was hosted by Kennebecasis Valley Outreach and the NB Silent Witness Project.

Alice, who was 80 years old and suffering from dementia at the time of her death in 2004, had been left overnight gagged and bound by her husband. She suffocated.

Several distinguished guests participated in the ceremony including the Mayor of Quispamsis, Murray Driscoll and Father LeBlanc, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, who offered a prayer. Alice's son, David Leadlay spoke of the family's relief in knowing that his mother was no longer just a statistic and that her voice would be added to that of other women in the province who had lost their lives to domestic violence.

The Hon. Marie-Claude Blais, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, emphasized the importance of working together to end violence against women. The key-note speaker, Dr. Deborah Doherty, representing the NB Silent Witness Committee, spoke of the unique vulnerabilities of older adults to abuse particularly those with cognitive impairments and disabilities who become increasingly dependent on a caregiver. She noted

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014

that we must take care not to minimize the tragedy of Alice's death because of her age and that we should check our own biases and stereotypes. Laun-Marie Scott then explained the services provided by Kennebecasis Outreach and Cst Kelley McIntyre of the Rothesay Police talked about her involvement in creating the silhouette and the role of the police in helping victims.

The event was opened and closed with a beautiful rendition of the Silent Witness song, "I'll Stand in the Rain".



Dr. Deborah Doherty, from the New Brunswick Silent Witness project Committee spoke to the audience at the unveiling.



The Silent Witnesses are housed at Beausejour Family Crisis Centre in

Silent Witness Newsletter August 2014

Shediac New Brunswick when they are not traveling and many times friends or family members stop in to visit their loved ones on special occasions.

How Can You Help?

There are many ways to get involved.

The Silent Witness National Initiative is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Unlike many other non-profits, we have no paid staff members, no office building (we're completely virtual!) and are run by generous volunteers around the globe- all working towards a common goal - to end domestic violence homicides.

Any funds that we receive are used directly to reach our goal, and pay for things like printed materials, website design and maintenance, to offset costs for meetings and to support Silent Witness projects and programs around the globe - no funds are used for paid staff, we are completely volunteer run!

If you'd like to help us reach our goal by making a donation, please click [HERE](#).

Thank you.



As always, if you have something you'd like to add to next month's Newsletter, be sure to send us an email. Enjoy the last few weeks of summer and we'll see you in the fall!

Sincerely,

Nancy Rafi

Silent Witness National Initiative