



Family Justice Center

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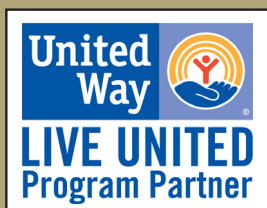
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Family Justice Center Issues Call For Artwork

By Julie A. Doerr,
 FJC Manager of Community Relations

The Family Justice Center (FJC) is seeking submissions for its third annual juried art show and auction. With the help of Crowley Webb and Associates, the FJC is taking the event to the next level and changing the name from *A New stART* to *Mosaic*. *Mosaic* is a silent and live auction featuring a stunning variety of works by primarily Western New York artists. Including a delectable array of hors d'oeuvres and wine selections, *Mosaic* supports the FJC's mission of providing free, one-stop services to victims of domestic violence.



Mosaic will be held at Asbury Hall on Thursday, October 21, 2010, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. The auction is for the benefit of the FJC, and proceeds will be split 50-50

between the artist and the FJC.

The show is open to artists 16 years of age and older working on canvas and paper in any medium, including photography. The show recognizes the courage and resilience of survivors of

September 13, 2010.

The full call for work with the entry form may be found at www.mosaicbuffalo.com. The jurors for *Mosaic* are David L. Buck, Joanna Angie and Ani Hoover.

David L. Buck is creative director and president, Crowley Webb and Associates

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Family Justice Center Seeks Award Nominees

By Julie A. Doerr,
 FJC Manager of Community Relations

The Family Justice Center (FJC) is seeking nominees for its annual Susan Still Award and *The Buffalo News* Founders Award. The honorees will be announced at the FJC's *Mosaic* art auction event on Thursday, October 21, 2010. *Mosaic* marks October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Read more about the art show and auction in the article "Family Justice Center Issues Call for Artwork" on this page.

The FJC recognized Susan Still, domestic violence survivor herself and spirited voice for all victims, in 2007 by naming its most prestigious award in her honor. Nominees for the Susan Still Award should be residents of Erie County who have dedicated their careers to serving and advocating for victims of domestic/intimate partner violence and their families. Nominees' service may include professional and/or volunteer experience. Nominees will have demonstrated

uncommon courage, tenacity, and compassion over a lifetime of service to those victimized by domestic violence. Past winners of the Susan Still Award include Carmen Gallardo of Hispanics United of Buffalo and Assistant United States Attorney Richard Maigret.

The Buffalo News Founders Award was created in 2007 to honor an individual or organization that has demonstrated innovation in the creation and delivery of services for victims or education/outreach programs for the general public. Nominees' services and/or programs must be delivered in Erie County. Previous recipients of *The Buffalo News* Founders award include Darleen Pickering Hummert/Theatre for Change and Resources and Help Against Marital Abuse or RAHAMA.

Continued on page 8

Volunteer Spotlight: Nina Faso



By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of
Community Relations

The Family Justice Center (FJC) is pleased to introduce volunteer Nina Faso. As a volunteer, Faso is responsible for client intakes, answering the SAFELine and performing other duties as needed.

Faso first became interested in volunteering at the FJC while obtaining her masters degree in criminal justice at Buffalo State College. There she chose to do a research project on perceptions of sexual assault among women who experience domestic violence. Faso said as a result of her research project, she wanted to empower both men and women to overcome the challenges that surround those two serious issues. She said volunteering at the FJC is her way of giving back to the community.

"While preparing to do an intake one day, I was informed that (the) client was upset by the experience she had endured and (had) tears streaming down her face," said Faso. "I felt compelled to (lift) her spirits, encouraging her to believe that she controls her life and has the power to change her circumstances. (When) I left the room, she (had) a smile on her face."

Faso plans on continuing her education, pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology and a juris doctorate degree.

Currently, Faso is a certified trainer for Darden Restaurants. She also serves as a legislative volunteer to Erie County Legislator Lynn Marinelli and has volunteered with the Erie County District Attorney's Victim/Witness Assistance Program and interned at Erie County Pre-Trial Services. In addition, Faso held the elected position of judicial delegate for the 8th judicial district of Erie County.

In her well-earned spare time, Faso enjoys reading and spending time with her friends and family.

News-Magazine Updates



By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations

In this issue of News & Views, the Family Justice Center (FJC) introduces you to *Mosaic*, a beautiful arrangement of art and entertainment. This year we are taking our annual art show and auction to a whole new level with the help of Crowley Webb and Associates. We have a new name, a new logo, spectacular jurors and a whole new attitude. Read all about our call for artwork in my article on page one, and our call for award nominations in my article also on page one. Be sure to save the date, October 21, 2010 and get your tickets for *Mosaic* at www.mosaicbuffalo.com or by calling (716) 558-5281 before they're gone! All proceeds from this captivating silent and live art auction will go to the FJC.

One of the most dangerous and most common forms physical domestic abuse can take is manual strangulation. However, in New York State, this horrific crime has historically been treated as merely a violation. Now the punishment for manual strangulation has been stiffened. Read the details in my article "Bill Strengthening Penalties for Strangulation Now Law" on page four.

With fall 2010 right around the corner the election season will soon be in full swing. But can you imagine being afraid to vote because doing so may reveal your whereabouts to someone who has hurt you? Until recently, domestic violence victims have had to live with this reality every time they went to the polls. That's because under a former law, local boards of elections had to provide the address of any registered voter, as long as the request was in writing and the applicable law was cited. See how a new bill has changed that in my article on page seven.

This month we also introduce to you our newest board of directors' member, Ron Olejniczak in my article on page three. Nina Faso is our Volunteer Spotlight this month on this page. And the FJC is the proud recipient of a grant from the Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle. Read all about it on page four.

As summer winds down, it's important to keep in mind that thousands of people in Western New York are hurting and countless families are being ripped apart by violence. This fall you can help do something about it. You can buy a ticket (or two or three!) for *Mosaic*, buy some beautiful works of art and help the Family Justice Center ensure that our free, confidential one-stop wrap-around services are available for domestic violence victims for years to come. Here's thanking you in advance for your generosity!

Stats

June 2010

Total intakes - 187
SAFELine calls - 42

July 2010

Total intakes - 155
SAFELine calls - 43

From the Desk of Mary Travers Murphy, Executive Director



Domestic abuse haunts every age group and if there's one thing I've learned during my first six months on the job is how important it is to start talking about this issue to young people. The younger the better.

When my 8-year-old niece, Rachel, enthusiastically and innocently peppered me with questions about the Family Justice Center, I filled her in on exactly what we do, why we do it and how heartbreaking it is to see kids her age and younger walk out our doors headed

for shelter. Her reaction: another 25 questions followed by a promise to help.

Two days later, unbeknownst to me, Rachel and her 5-year-old twin sisters Mary and Laura set up a lemonade stand on the shores of Lake Erie and on behalf of the Family Justice Center staged a little fundraiser re-hydrating every single beachgoer who strolled by. Business boomed and the beaming trio arrived at our home the following evening presenting a plastic container packed with dollar bills and change.

Manna from heaven!

And more questions from Rachel, who as she matures, won't hesitate to talk about this issue to friends and those she suspects may be victims.

And that's the second insight I've gained six months into the job: the more comfortable someone feels talking about what they're going through, the more likely they are to talk and eventually to leave.

In the process of securing information from one of our clients the other day, a female, I accidentally referred to her perpetrator as "she" instead of "he." Keep in mind we see people from every walk of life: gay, straight, old, young, educated, uneducated, you name it we see it so rarely do we blink in reaction to what we hear.

When the client expressed shock that I might think her perpetrator was a she, I told her there's absolutely nothing she could tell me that would shock me, that we truly do hear it all, see it all. She giggled; I laughed and then watched her completely relax into a comfort level that allowed the rest of her story to pour out. The new round of info wasn't pretty, but I'm certain had she not been truly comfortable, the additional and devastating details (and her true intent behind the visit) would have stayed behind closed doors.

Moral of the story: if you suspect someone is being victimized, ask, but do everything in your power to make him or her feel as comfortable as possible answering. A little humor may help. Never judge. Never criticize. Never second guess. Allow his or her story to come tumbling out. And then take him or her by the hand, or hand him or her our palm card and the Family Justice Center will take it from there.



Bathing beauties Rachel, Mary and Laura Travers raised \$20 for the FJC with their lemonade stand – it was just another day at the beach!

Olejniczak Joins FJC Board of Directors

By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations



The Family Justice Center (FJC) is pleased to welcome Ronald M. Olejniczak of Orchard Park to its board of directors. Olejniczak brings an extensive financial background to the FJC.

After living for 23 years in Connecticut, Olejniczak recently moved back to Western New York. Prior to returning to the Buffalo area he was vice president and controller for Aetna Inc. in Hartford, Connecticut. He also held the positions of chief accounting officer, vice president-financial reporting, analysis and policy and director of accounting policy. Before joining Aetna, Olejniczak worked as vice president and manager of financial reporting and policy for Shawmut National Corporation (predecessor to Fleet Financial Corp. and Bank of America) also located in Hartford and worked as senior audit manager at Price Waterhouse in Hartford and as audit senior at Price Waterhouse in Buffalo. In addition, Olejniczak was a staff accountant for Fox and Company (predecessor to Grant Thornton) in Buffalo.

Olejniczak holds a bachelor of science degree in accounting from Canisius College and he is a certified public accountant. His professional memberships include the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the New York Society of Certified Public Accountants and Financial Executives International.

Like so many of the FJC's cherished volunteers, Olejniczak said he was inspired to join the board after taking an FJC "Behind Closed Doors" tour.

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Tax Deductible Donations

Payable to Family Justice Center of Erie County, Inc.

Mail contributions c/o "Donations," or simply visit the [FJC website](#) and use our secure, online PayPal method.

Donations Wish List

- NFTA bus tokens in packages of 10. We use at least 4 packages per month.
- Supermarket gift cards for clients (\$10, \$25, or \$50).
- Office supply store gift cards (from Office Max, Office Depot, etc.).
- Fellowes® SB-99Ci 100% Jam Proof 17-Sheet Cross-Cut Shredder from Office Depot.
- Digital camera.
- Paper cups for hot beverages.
- Paper towels.
- Volunteer to assist clients with the intake process and to respond to phone inquiries.
- An invitation from you to your family and friends for upcoming Behind Closed Doors tours.
- Volunteer to speak in the community on our behalf.
- Become a "project volunteer," working from home on specific time-limited projects, e.g. writing grants, building databases, managing distribution of marketing materials, writing articles for our electronic newsletter.

If you would like to fulfill any of our wishes, please contact Julie A. Doerr at 558-5281 or jdoerr@fjcSAFE.org.



FJC Receives Grant from Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle

**By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations**

The *Many Faces of Mercy* Giving Circle has awarded the Family Justice Center (FJC) a grant of \$2,000.00. The grant will be used to fund the FJC's Volunteer Chaplain Project.

The FJC Volunteer Chaplain Project aims to educate the religious community about domestic violence and to provide spiritual support to domestic violence victims who come to the FJC for services. Through a better understanding of domestic violence, religious leaders will be better equipped to help congregants who approach them for help with the problem. In addition, with volunteer chaplains on-site at the FJC, clients have spiritual leaders to speak with should they feel they need that type of support. With spiritual support, another barrier to leaving a violent relationship is removed for the victim.

The grant will be presented to the FJC at a ceremony on September 14, 2010.

The mission of the *Many Faces of Mercy* Giving Circle is to promote economic self-sufficiency and/or well-being of women and young girls.



Bill Strengthening Penalties for Strangulation Now Law

**By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations**

New York State Governor David Paterson has signed into law legislation that creates the crimes of first- and second-degree strangulation and criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation.

About one-third of the domestic violence cases handled at the FJC involve strangulation. However, the actual number of strangulation cases is probably much higher, as victims frequently minimize the level of violence and police and medical personnel often fail to recognize it. In reality, injuries suffered from manual strangulation can frequently be quite serious and dangerous.

"A strangulation victim may look fine, however, he or she may have a serious injury," said Carol Webster, a nurse in the FJC's Forensic Medical Unit. "That's because of underlying brain damage due to a lack of oxygen during the strangulation. In fact, we treat our strangulation investigations as homicide prevention and send each client home with a reference sheet of post-strangulation danger signs and symptoms."

What Our Clients Are Saying About Us

The true test of the success of any organization lies in the attitudes and opinions of its clients. Here's just a sampling of some of the wonderful things Family Justice Center clients have to say about us . . .*

"I feel safe in this place. Very nice, peaceful place. I learned a lot about the laws and proper ways to keep myself and children safe at home. Thank you for all your help. I will refer others to your center."

"Very friendly staff members. I feel a little better about the bad situation. You all made me feel as though it can and will get better."

"I was impressed with how quickly I was in a room and being talked to. There was hardly any time wasted waiting."

"They were very helpful to me. At first I was nervous about coming here but after speaking to the person here I felt more at ease. I didn't realize how much help was here for me. Thank you very much."

* Source: Family Justice Center Exit Surveys



Break the Cycle

Help Stop Domestic Violence

1st Annual Bike-a-thon

[Walkers Welcome]

For more information visit: www.csw.erie.gov

Saturday, October 2, 2010

Isle View Park, Tonawanda, NY

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Erie County Commission on the Status of Women in
Partnership with: Crisis Services, YWCA Tonawanda, Family
Justice Center, Saaithi of Rochester, Inc., Haven House

Save Your Job When You Save Your Life

By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations

It's a sad fact that many domestic violence victims do not leave their abusers because they are financially dependent on them. Consequently it is even harder for a victim to leave her perpetrator when the victim is out of work. In addition, a 2005 study by the National Institute of Justice found that women who lose their jobs may be subject to escalating abuse.

At a time when a victim is in the most danger, i.e. when she is leaving her abuser, the victim is also at the highest risk of being fired. That's because that is the time when a victim has to attend to many needs that may cause her to miss work. For instance, she may need medical attention, and may be seeking housing, crisis counseling or an order of protection and may have to meet with lawyers.

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FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Suzanne E. Tomkins
*Clinical Professor,
SUNY at Buffalo School of Law*

Olejniczak Joins FJC Board of Directors

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"(I) was very impressed with the (FJC's) facilities, staff and day to day operations," said Olejniczak. "I was interested in working on a proactive board and I get the sense this board is very much engaged in the FJC's mission based on my discussion with a few of the board members after the tour."

Olejniczak said he intends to put his professional background to use for the benefit of the FJC.

"I believe that my background and experience as a CPA will help strengthen the financial aspect of the FJC," said Olejniczak. "Recognizing that the FJC continues to rely on volunteers and a number of funding sources, I can bring my talents and energy to the table to assist the board in sustaining the FJC's goals and fundraising efforts."

In his leisure time, Olejniczak enjoys spending time with his family and rediscovering all there is to do in Western New York.

Did You Know...

Domestic violence is not about anger or losing control. It is an intentional choice focused on maintaining power and control in a relationship. It is a combination of physical attacks, terrorist acts, and controlling tactics used by abusers that result in fear as well as physical and psychological harm to victims.

Domestic violence crosses all economic, educational, ethnic, sexual orientation, age, religious, and racial lines. There is no "typical" victim.

Domestic violence is the most under-reported crime in the country, with the actual incidence 10 times higher than is reported.



Biz community feels domestic violence pain

Friday, August 13, 2010 - by Matt Chandler
Reprinted with permission from Business First of Buffalo

Malika Henry was getting ready to take her children into the public library in her hometown of Cleveland. She never saw her assailant coming.

"He just popped out from behind a car and attacked me. He beat me to a pulp, and it was a security guard at the library that saved my life," she said, recounting the attack that prompted her to flee to Buffalo.

Experts say domestic violence incidents continue to occur at an alarmingly high rate and cross social, economic and racial lines. And they say that here in Western New York, domestic violence affects thousands of families each year. Mary Travers Murphy, executive director of the Family Justice Center, says domestic issues have a staggering carry-over impact on the business sector.

"Domestic violence costs employers between \$3 (billion) and \$5 billion a year in lost productivity," she said.

Add to that the cost of absenteeism and higher health-care costs, and Travers Murphy said business owners and managers have a vested interest in looking for signs that an employee is a victim of domestic violence.

"The culmination of all of that is close to 30 percent of survivors losing their jobs," she said. "Almost 100 percent of the people going through a domestic violence situation, it manifests itself in the workplace."

Travers Murphy said in many cases, the spillover can have a potentially deadly impact on co-workers, as well.

"We see a lot of the assaults being played out in the workplace. Seventy-five percent of workplace

homicides involve women and their ex-intimate partners," she said. "It is a place where the victim can't hide. The abuser knows where they work, when they work and they can track them down there."

Helping to cope with the problem

As the new executive director of the Family Justice Center, Travers Murphy is working to expand the role the business community plays in bringing an end to domestic violence. She regularly invites people to tour the FJC offices and seeks to educate them about what they can do as business owners and managers to make a difference in Western New York.

"They can pay attention and ask questions," she said. "One in four women in their lives will be touched by domestic violence. If you are running a business and you are paying attention, you'll see it."

As for the story of Malika Henry, it has a happy ending.

Fearing for the safety of her children, Henry eventually escaped, taking refuge with her sister in Buffalo.

Two years after the beating in the parking lot, she has earned an associate's degree from Bryant and Stratton College, is continuing her studies at Buffalo State and is an active volunteer at the Family Justice Center.

"I don't have any reason to look back," she said. "I'm so much more confident of things now, and that situation is in the past."

Bill Strengthening Penalties for Strangulation Now Law *continued from page 4*

Previously, non-lethal manual strangulation was classified as a violation under New York State law, the same classification as unlawfully posting advertisements and loitering. The governor's signature amends the penal law by adding a new article and creating the new crimes of strangulation in the first degree, a class C violent felony; strangulation in the second degree, a class D violent felony; and criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation, a class A misdemeanor.

According to the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (NYSOPDV), strangulation is a form of asphyxia characterized by the closure of the blood vessels and/or air passages of the neck as a result of external pressure on the neck. It is often incorrectly referred to as choking, which involves blocking, or obstructing the windpipe. Recent studies show one in ten violent deaths in the United States each year is due to strangulation.

Furthermore, studies show that strangulation is one of the best predictors for an eventual domestic violence homicide. A study

published in 2008 in the Journal of Emergency Medicine found that the odds of becoming an attempted homicide victim increased by about seven-fold for women who had been strangled previously by their partners.

"The need for a tougher penalty is apparent in Erie County, and I believe this law addresses that through the creation of these new crimes with increased penalties and helps ensure that offenders who commit this heinous act are successfully prosecuted," said 143rd District New York State Assemblyman Dennis Gabryszak in a recent news release.

"Domestic violence strangulation victims will often say 'He choked me, but there are no marks,'" said Mary Travers Murphy, FJC executive director. "The facts show that just because manual strangulation often doesn't leave visible injuries that doesn't mean that it is not a very serious offense. Strangulation can lead to death and it terrifies its victims. The Family Justice Center's aim is to hold offenders accountable and this law takes a giant step toward that end."

FJC, Buffalo Bills and Verizon Wireless Team Up to Aid Domestic Abuse Victims

The Family Justice Center (FJC), Buffalo Bills and Verizon Wireless urge fans to bring their no-longer-used cell phones to the Bills versus Jacksonville Jaguars game on Sunday, October 10, 2010 to benefit victims of domestic violence. Fans can deposit their old phones in collection bins located at the gates as they enter Ralph Wilson Stadium.

Through Verizon Wireless' Hopeline program, the phones will be refurbished and recycled or sold. Proceeds will be used to purchase wireless phones for domestic violence victims to use in an emergency or threatening situations. Hopeline also makes financial grants to domestic violence organizations.



Law Gives Victims of Domestic Violence Security to Vote

By Julie A. Doerr,
FJC Manager of Community Relations

New York State Governor David Paterson has signed into law legislation requiring that voter registration records of domestic violence victims be kept confidential.

The new law allows victims of domestic violence to request a court order that requires the board of elections to keep their registration records confidential. Victims' addresses will be sealed, protecting victims from being contacted by their abusers.

Previously, domestic violence victims were faced with the choice of voting and revealing their identities or not voting at all to protect themselves. That's because under the former law, local boards of elections had to provide the address of any registered voter, as long as the request was in writing and the applicable law was cited.

"Giving victims the ability to vote without fear that their information will get into the wrong hands gives them a sense of security," New York State Assemblyman Dennis Gabryszak said in a recent news release. "This law will allow victims to take part in the democratic process and give them back a piece of their normal lives."

The bill also extends the option of voting by special ballot to those threatened with emotional harm.

"This is another useful tool victims fleeing abusive relationships can use to keep a confidential location and protect the safety of themselves and their children," said Family Justice Center (FJC) Executive Director Mary Travers Murphy. "It's a step victims can take to help rebuild their lives."

Family Justice Center Issues Call For Artwork

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and a Buffalo Arts Studio resident artist. Buck has 31 years of experience in illustration, design and advertising and has several years of instruction in painting and graphic design. He is a member of Hallwalls, the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County and the Board of Trustees of the Burchfield Penney Art Center. His work has been shown at Paint the Town for the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Hallwalls, Burchfield Penney Art Center, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, the Buffalo Arts Studio and the Kenan Center.

Joanna Angie is an artist, muralist and

founder and director of the Buffalo Arts Studio. Angie has produced numerous murals in schools and churches, including: Carnegie Hall Towers and St. Paul's Cathedral; and she restored the Tiffany murals at Westminster Presbyterian Church, for which won second place in a national competition. In 2001 she received the Arts Council's Arts Supporter Award. Angie has worked on numerous community committees including: The Pan Am Public Art Project, The Windows Project and the Buffalo/Niagara Gallery Guide. Her credits as an artist include numerous solo and group exhibitions. Her recent body of art is influenced by travel in China, Israel, and Tibet.

Ani Hoover's colorful abstract paintings have been shown at the Albright-Knox

Art Gallery, the Burchfield Penney Art Center, the Castellani Art Museum, Buffalo Arts Studio, The Neighborhood Collective Gallery, Insite Gallery, Studio Hart, Betty's Restaurant and Indigo Gallery. Using a circle shape as a vehicle for applying paint, Hoover approaches painting experimentally, often using different kinds of paint and applications on one surface in an oversized format. Hoover's work is in the collections of M&T Bank, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Burchfield Penney Art Center, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, SUNY Buffalo's Anderson Gallery and in numerous private collections across the country.

For more information about the FJC or Mosaic, contact the FJC at (716) 558-5281 or visit www.fjcsafe.org.

Mosaic is supported by:

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THE BUFFALO NEWS

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WORXWORDS OF BUFFALO
On Your Side

wbfo 88.7

Wegmans

Family Justice Center Seeks Award Nominees

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Executive Director Mary Travers Murphy encourages nominations from across Erie County.

"There are people who are out there every day, toiling away and dealing with some pretty stressful situations, all in hopes of keeping victims of domestic violence safe. Our intentions are to honor commitment, excellence and innovation in service to those victimized by domestic violence and, also, to raise awareness of the issue in our community."

Nominations are due by September 24, 2010 and may be made on line at www.mosaicbuffalo.com.

For more information about the awards or Mosaic, contact the FJC at (716) 558-5281 or visit www.fjcsafe.org.

Save Your Job When You Save Your Life*

Continued from page 5

It is critically important that a victim know her employment rights when she is leaving her abuser so that she can attend to these matters without fear of being fired.

In New York state, a law was passed in July 2009 that states that a domestic violence victim cannot be discriminated against by an employer. That means that an employer may not fire or refuse to hire someone solely because the employee or potential employee is a victim of domestic abuse (NY Exec Law § 296(1)(a)). In addition, a criminal law in New York state forbids an employer from punishing a domestic abuse victim for having to miss work to:

- Testify in a criminal case,
- Meet with a district attorney about a criminal case, or
- Seek an order of protection in criminal or family court.

It is important to keep in mind that an employer can ask for proof from the district attorney or court staff that a victim was present in court and why she was there. Therefore, it is recommended that victims ask for a letter or other proof while they are in court. The employer does not have to pay an employee for the time missed due to court (NY Penal Law § 215.14).

If an employer does fire or punish a domestic violence victim for missing work, the victim can contact the police since the employer may actually be committing a crime for which he/she can be arrested. Additionally, a claim may be filed with the New York State Division of Human Rights because this behavior could also qualify as discrimination.

* Sources: Spring 2010 Ms. Magazine and www.womenslaw.org



Family Justice Center raising awareness

Monday, July 26, 2010 - by Matt Chandler
Reprinted with permission from *The Buffalo Law Journal*

Malika Henry was getting ready to take her children into the public library in her hometown of Cleveland. She never saw her assailant coming.

"He just popped out from behind a car and attacked me. He beat me to a pulp, and it was a security guard at the library that saved my life," she said, recounting the attack that prompted her to flee to Buffalo.

Experts say domestic violence incidents continue to occur at an alarmingly high rate and cross social, economic and racial lines. And they say that here in Western New York, domestic violence affects thousands of families each year.

Fearing for the safety of her children, Henry eventually escaped, taking refuge with her sister in Buffalo.

Two years after the beating in the parking lot, she earned an associate's degree from Bryant and Stratton College, is continuing her studies at Buffalo State and is an active volunteer at the Family Justice Center.

The center, at 237 Main St. in Buffalo, is a central facility for men and women that brings together all of the facets of domestic violence assistance under one roof.

Though she doesn't share her personal story with the clients she meets on intake ("The individuals that come in here are fragile and they need to know that the person they are talking to is stable"), Henry offered a look at domestic violence from someone who survived and escaped - something she knows many women in her shoes can't say.

Nowhere to go

"I had freed myself from the relationship but he would still call and I was still getting harassed," she said. "Him and I were friends and he wanted more. When he saw that wasn't gonna happen, he tried by force."

With four children to consider, Henry said she knew she had to do something.

"I couldn't go anywhere. No matter where I was, it was like he would just pop out of nowhere," she said. "As things kept escalating and it looked like it was never going to stop, I decided to make a drastic change. I sold everything I owned and moved here. I didn't even tell anyone I was leaving."

Henry said she felt victimized twice - once by her attacker and a second time as she entered the justice system.

"The first time I made a police report and went to the station, being there was the coldest place I had to be," she said. "They didn't care about the emotional part of it. It

was like, 'OK, where did it happen? What happened? Do you want to file charges? Good, we're done.'

"Emotionally, I still was not being taken care of. I left there feeling like 'What had I done? What has really changed?' Had I had something like (the FJC), had I had a place where there were people who wanted to hear what happened to me, I would have reached out for help a lot sooner," she said.

Numbers don't lie

Mary Travers Murphy is executive director of the Family Justice Center. As she travels to various communities, educating people about the services it offers, she said often she hears horror stories that echo Henry's.

"There is a statistic that one in four women are victims of domestic violence, and when I first started this job, I thought that sounded high," she said. "Now, after four months of speaking on this topic, I can tell you that one-in-four statistic plays out every single time. Whether I'm in the swankiest places in East Clarence or on the deep East Side, that one-in-four stat plays."

Asked if her organization has seen a rise in domestic violence cases since the recession began - some reports suggest job loss and financial struggles play a role - Travers Murphy said she didn't see any hard evidence.

"A lot of people lose their jobs and don't beat up their spouse," she said. "I know our numbers are increasing, but I can't say it is tied to the economy."

The impetus for an "absolutely brilliant model" at the FJC was the idea that victims such as Henry were being forced to tell and retell their stories multiple times, she said. They were also made to navigate a complex system to access help from a dozen different organizations that were often spread across Western New York.

"The fragmented nature of the services often drove clients to throw in the towel," she said.

Today, the FJC houses 12 organizations under one roof at the downtown Buffalo office. From Crisis Services and Haven House to the Erie County District Attorney and the Buffalo Police, victims can get assistance in one location. And the results speak for themselves, according to Travers Murphy.

"We are still in our infancy stage, with the FJC only four years old," she said. "We've served between 1,000 and 1,200 clients (annually) and we are seeing our numbers rise as more people understand who we are and what the Family Justice Center is about."

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Family Justice Center raising awareness

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“How the hell did this happen to our family?”

To raise awareness, the center invites members of the civic and business community to tour the facility. At the end, visitors meet Debbie Jaeger, who puts a face to the specter of domestic violence. That face belongs to her sister, Jill.

Debbie describes her sister as “beautiful, educated, independent” and says she never imagined domestic violence could invade her close-knit family.

After meeting and marrying her husband, Jill settled down to raise a family outside of Syracuse, though she still made regular trips back to Tonawanda to see her family.

Jaeger said she was aware that there was trouble in Jill’s marriage and that the couple eventually agreed to separate. But there was no sign of what was to come.

After bringing her two children home one year for Easter, Jill returned to Central New York to the home that, despite formally separating, she shared with her husband.

“I got a call from her Monday night saying everything was good, that he had dinner waiting for them when they got home,” Jaeger said. “Tuesday morning, I got a call saying Jill was in the hospital. He hit her over the head with a baseball bat seven times.”

Jill Russell-Cahill suffered multiple injuries including a broken eye socket and broken arm. Her head was swollen to twice the size of normal, and doctors had to remove a piece of her skull out to reduce the swelling. As the family waited by her bedside, unsure if Jill would survive, her husband posted bail and walked out of jail.

“There’s a lot you learn about the justice system that you never knew,” Jaeger said. “One of the most profound things I’ve ever heard was when he was let out on bail. I was so angry and the district attorney pulled me aside and said to me, ‘Debbie, you’ve got to understand, it’s the criminal

justice system, not the victim’s justice system.’ Along the way, you learn that the criminals have so many more rights than the victims do.”

Despite the severity of her injuries, Jill survived the attack. After nearly six months in the hospital, she was up and around, and doctors planned to release her. It was the miracle her family had hoped and prayed for. Just days before Jill was to be released, however, her husband - out on bail and awaiting trial on the assault charges - paid his wife a visit.

“He disguised himself as a janitor, snuck into the hospital and poisoned her,” Jaeger said.

If reading those words hit you like a punch in the stomach, watch the faces in the crowd as Jaeger delivers them to a group of first-time visitors to the Family Justice Center. Travers Murphy said that even after all of the times she has heard the account, she tears up.

Jill’s husband was convicted of murdering his wife and sentenced to death. That sentence was later overturned and ultimately reduced. While Jaeger feels the man who murdered her sister deserves to die, rather than focusing on what she can’t control, she has spent the last three years volunteering at the Family Justice Center. By sharing her story, she wants to reach those people in the audience who, statistics say, are both offenders and victims.

Travers Murphy, meanwhile, said she sees Jill Russell-Cahill at every event she speaks at and every public place she visits. The face may change, the age may differ, but the end results are tragedies waiting to happen.

On the flip side, she points to Malika Henry as an example of overcoming the odds and becoming a survivor - not a victim - of domestic violence. As she sits in the children’s play room at the center, Henry smiles as she talks about working with other women and rebuilding her life, thanks in part to her experiences at the Family Justice Center.

“I don’t have any reason to look back,” she said. “I’m so much more confident of things now and that situation is in the past.”



Erie County third in state in intimate partner killings

As total declines, WNY deaths rise as part of larger issue of domestic violence homicides

Wednesday, August 11, 2010 - by Sandra Tan and Tom Precious
Reprinted with permission from *The Buffalo News*

More Erie County residents in intimate relationships were killed by their partner last year than those in similar circumstances in the Bronx or any other county in the state, except Queens and Kings (Brooklyn), according to a new report.

Erie County recorded nine such homicides last year, part of a growing

trend of domestic violence that runs contrary to the statewide numbers for killings involving current or former spouses or significant others.

“Domestic violence homicides [are] a huge problem in Erie and Niagara counties,” said Mary Travers Murphy, executive director of the Family Justice Center, which connects abuse victims with various support and criminal-justice agencies. “It’s a huge problem, and it touches every single segment of society.”

Statewide, intimate partner killings

declined slightly from 2008 to last year, according to a report Tuesday by the state Division of Criminal Justice Services.

But the opposite is true in Erie County, where such homicides have risen sharply. None were reported in 2007, but the number rose to three in 2008 and nine last year.

In Niagara County, the three such killings last year also represented an

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Erie County third in state in intimate partner killings

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increase from the previous two years and accounted for a third of all the county's homicides.

The number of deaths involving women in intimate relationships does not surprise local victim abuse advocates. The Buffalo News previously reported that domestic violence resulted in the deaths of 13 women in Erie and Niagara counties during a seven-month period starting in November 2008.

"The numbers — do they horrify me? Absolutely. Do they surprise me? No," Travers Murphy said.

Including domestic violence homicides involving the death of a child, parent or sibling, last year's total for the two counties came to 16.

In releasing the data, state officials were cautious not to attach any firm explanations for changes in domestic violence cases, though they said the recession's effects on families could be among the risk factors in some abuse cases, though not a cause on its own.

"Women are most at risk in their own homes," said Sean Byrne, the acting commissioner of the division, which compiled the data and produced Tuesday's annual report.

Byrne noted that, among last year's homicide victims, 44 percent of all girls over age 16 and women were killed by an intimate partner last year.

The total number of all domestic violence deaths statewide dropped to 130 last year from 147 in 2008 and 137 in 2007. The figures include both heterosexual and same-sex partners.

Officials said children account for most of the reduction in domestic violence deaths; 17 lost their lives last year, compared with 31 the prior year.

But women, the report found, were the victims in 76 percent of the intimate partner murders. In 17 percent of cases, the killer committed suicide; all those perpetrators were male.

Local abuse advocates say the report's numbers reinforce the need for public officials at all levels to invest in domestic violence services and programs.

"One domestic violence homicide is too many for any community," said Kristen Luppino-Gholston, with the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence.

The coalition is pushing for a local "fatality review team" that would dissect domestic violence homicide cases to help prevent future deaths.

Travers Murphy pointed out that the Family Justice Center worked with 1,000 clients in the first six months of

this year.

"We've seen nearly equal the number of clients that we've been seeing for the whole year," she said. "We're on track to have a 100 percent increase compared [with] last year."

She also said that according to Central Police Services, police fielded 9,200 emergency calls for domestic disputes last year in Erie County.

Amy Barasch, the executive director of the state Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, said such homicides are "the tip of the iceberg." She said the difference between aggravated assault and death can be "nothing more than luck."

In a separate report, Barasch's office noted that courts in the state last year issued 262,327 orders of protection — up 21 percent from the previous year. She cautioned that only about half the victims of domestic abuse cases report the assaults to law enforcement.

Barasch pointed to the difficulty in determining whether the number of domestic violence cases has increased or more victims are seeking help from law enforcement or health-or welfare-related services.

She also said officials noticed a large spike in domestic violence cases before the recession actually hit. Studies show economic factors can exacerbate domestic violence, but they don't cause it, she said.

Notes on Safety Planning ...

The most important service we offer at the Family Justice Center is safety planning. Safety planning is literally that — a plan to help a domestic violence victim be as safe as possible should a crisis erupt. Below are some elements of a safety plan for a victim who is still living with his/her abuser:

- Move to a safer space during an argument. Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without an exit to the outside.
- Leave the house for a short time. Think about how you would get out safely and where you would go. Have your purse and car keys ready.
- Ask a neighbor or friend for help. A neighbor can call police if he/she hears violent noises coming from your home. A friend can take necessary action if you use a code word that you have arranged in advance.
- Call for help. Think about who you could call: police, domestic violence hotline, friends, family. Know these numbers or program them in to your phone, if you can do so safely.
- Include your children. Make sure they know their address and phone number and how to get help. Tell children not to get between fighting adults. Plan a code word to let them know to get help or leave the house.



Behind Closed Doors Tours

Step behind our doors and witness first-hand what the FJC is all about. See what we do, why we do it, and how our one-stop, free, wrap-around model works.

- » September 7, 2010 @ 5:30 PM
- » September 21, 2010 @ 8:00 AM
- » October 5, 2010 @ 5:30 PM
- » October 19, 2010 @ 8:00 AM
- » November 2, 2010 @ 5:30 PM
- » November 16, 2010 @ 8:00 AM

To attend a tour, contact Julie A. Doerr at jdoerr@fjcsafe.org or (716) 558-5281.

Where We're Going, Where We've Been . . .

The Family Justice Center (FJC) is constantly out in the community, spreading the word about our services and letting victims of domestic violence know that they are not alone. Here's a list of the presentations and other community appearances the FJC made in June, July and August and will be making in September.

Where we've been:

6/2	Julie A. Doerr presentation at Greater Buffalo Works	7/22	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Youth Leadership Workshop at SUNY Buffalo
6/9	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Ladies Sodality at Blessed Trinity Church	7/23	Mary Travers Murphy live interview on WECK-AM radio
6/11	Judy Walker at PUSH (People United for Sustainable Housing) Buffalo Day of Health Tabling Event	7/28	Julie A. Doerr at Federal Health Fair (FedsGetFit) tabling event.
6/14	Julie A. Doerr presentation on FJC and teen dating violence to GED class at Computers for Children	8/2	Julie A. Doerr at National Night Out tabling event at ECMC
6/15	Mary Travers Murphy presentation on FJC and teen dating violence to GED class at ECC City Campus	8/2	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Erie 1 BOCES
6/17	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Coordinators of Combined Federal Campaign (federal workers)	8/3	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to University at Buffalo School of Nursing
6/19	Julie A. Doerr tour and teen dating violence training for Buffalo State College school administrators class	8/4	Mary Travers Murphy presentation for participants in the Fourth Annual Buffalo Niagara Professional Alliance Golf Outing
6/23	Christina Potempa domestic violence court training at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Orchard Park	8/23	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to HSBC Women's Forum
6/23	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Fidelis Care nurses, nurse practitioners and case workers	8/24	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Audubon Women Medical Group
6/24	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Episcopal Ascension Church		
7/12	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Zonta Clubs of Hamburg and Orchard Park		
7/14	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Independent Living Project		
7/19	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to University at Buffalo Student Affairs Department Heads		
7/21	Mary Travers Murphy interview on WUFO-FM radio		

Where we're going:

9/13	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to AAUW
9/15	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to Praxair staff
9/17	Grace Smith and Fatima Clark tabling event for Project Homeless Connect Buffalo
9/21	Julie A. Doerr presentation to Praxair staff
9/21	Mary Travers Murphy presentation to professional women's group at Brookfield Country Club
9/28	Mary Travers Murphy presentation at Payne's Restaurant, North Tonawanda

If you are interested in having a representative from the Family Justice Center speak at your company, school or organization, please contact Julie A. Doerr, FJC manager of community relations, at (716) 558-5281 or jdoerr@fjcsafe.org. We have speakers available to cover a wide variety of topics including: domestic violence general awareness and facts, the Family Justice Center history and services, teen dating violence and child witnesses to domestic violence.

ON-SITE PARTNERS

- » 8th Judicial District Courts
- » Buffalo Police Department
- » Child & Adolescent Treatment Services
- » Child & Family Services - Haven House
- » Crisis Services
- » Episcopal Diocese of WNY
- » EC Department of Social Services
- » EC District Attorney
- » EC Probation Department
- » Hispanics United of Buffalo
- » International Institute of Buffalo
- » Neighborhood Legal Services
- » UB Family Medicine, Inc.

OFF-SITE PARTNERS

- » Baker Victory Services
- » Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network
- » Buffalo VA Hospital - Women's Center
- » Catholic Charities
- » Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled
- » Deaf Adult Services
- » EC Central Police Services
- » EC Coalition Against Family Violence
- » EC Department of Health
- » EC Department of Senior Services
- » EC One Stop Training & Employment
- » EC Sheriff's Office
- » Every Person Influences Children
- » Gateway Longview
- » Gay & Lesbian Youth Services
- » Horizon Health Services
- » Jewish Family Services
- » Lakeshore Behavioral Health, Inc.
- » Mid-Erie Counseling & Treatment
- » Native American Community Services
- » Pride Center of Buffalo, Inc.
- » Salvation Army
- » SUNY at Buffalo Law School
- » SUNY at Buffalo School of Social Work
- » United Way of Buffalo & Erie County
- » Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.



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