

# Domestic Violence is on the Rise



**O**ctober is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. During this time, the Women's Center pays tribute to victims who have lost their lives, and survivors who have endured and overcome the horrors of family violence. Domestic Violence affects all of us in many ways—some have lived with violence in their homes, while others have supported friends, relatives, co-workers or neighbors living in abusive situations.

By Ann Chatfield, Women's Center Director

It happens every day here in Idaho. No community or family is immune. We all need to recognize that family violence affects everyone, not just those living with the abuse, and we all pay the collective costs to our community. This price tag comes not only in the form of the systematic destruction of individuals and their families, but also includes lost lives, lost productivity, increased criminal justice services, social services, psychological and health care costs. Family violence is not just a private family matter—it is a crime, and it is not only everyone's business, but also their obligation, to help put an end to this destructive cycle of abuse.

Kootenai County has experienced exceptional growth in the last ten years, and this trend is predicted to continue. It is a reasonable conclusion that a rise in population as experienced in this county would account for a rise in crime, but according to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), 2004 Crime in Idaho, the rate of violent crime has increased more rapidly than the population growth, and domestic violence calls are included in these numbers. The NIBRS, which reports on all of Region 1 which encompasses the five northern counties in Idaho who are served by Women's Center, Inc., also says that Region 1 "has the highest intimate partner violence victimization rate compared to other regions..." In addition, the results

of the Idaho Crime Victimization Survey, Sthor et al, 2000, state, "83 percent of incidents of domestic violence have gone unreported," and interviews with local law enforcement and others in the field agree that these statistics are accurate.

Reported to law enforcement or not, the number of crisis calls and people seeking assistance for safety has steadily increased at Women's Center, Inc. In 2000 the Women's Center received 2,722 calls for assistance, but by 2003/04 those numbers increased to 8,541; a staggering 200-plus percent increase. Additionally, in-person contacts increased by 1,213; a 170 percent increase, and domestic violence crisis calls increased by 63 percent. Unfortunately, our services are needed now more than ever!

The Women's Center, Inc. has managed to keep pace with the increased load with fewer paid advocates and less funding, but it is not easy as numbers of victims continue to increase while the resources in the community are struggling to keep up with the increased demands from our rapid population growth. However, the Women's Center has not cut services; in fact, this year our agency served 2,300 people impacted by crimes of domestic violence, and/or sexual assault because of support from our very generous community. This month, we invite all those who support our anti-violence message to join us and attend one or all of our sponsored events.

For additional information visit [www.cdawomenscenter.org](http://www.cdawomenscenter.org).

**T**eenagers across Idaho will be more informed about how to recognize and stop domestic violence thanks to a new federal grant, according to Idaho Senator Mike Crapo. Crapo lauded the effort behind the Idaho Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Project.

The Project, coordinated by the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, has just received an \$843,888 federal grant to develop the program.

Crapo noted funding for the effort comes through the federal Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA). The U.S. Department of Justice administers the funding which Crapo has fought to keep in place.

"Some of our youngest potential victims in the cycle of violence will receive education and anti-violence messages which can empower them to stop domestic violence and abuse. The federal

government is, and should be, a strong partner in these efforts to stop violence," said Crapo.

The Crime Victims Fund, administered by U.S. Department of Justice, supports over 40 crime victims' programs in Idaho. In 2005, the Fund distributed over \$2 million to Idaho crime victims in the form of either direct compensation or through victims' assistance programs.