

ON THE HOMEFRONT

10 Years
UNITED IN BREAKING THE CYCLE
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mayor Nenshi Acknowledges Domestic Violence a Community Issue



CDVC, a collective of agency representatives including HomeFront, hosted a mayoral forum on domestic violence.

On October 5, the Calgary Domestic Violence Committee (CDVC) hosted a forum on domestic violence prior to the municipal election on October 18. Newly elected Mayor, Naheed Nenshi, attended along with Oscar Fech, Bob Hawkesworth, Barb Higgins, Craig Burrows, Ric McIver and Wayne Stewart.

The forum was hosted at the Carriage House Inn and televised by ShawTV.

Candidates were challenged by the CDVC, a collective of agency representatives, to answer questions regarding domestic violence in Calgary.

The CDVC formulated questions for the candidates based on research and other collected data, to see what the response to a potential domestic violence or domestic homicide situation would be.

Currently, Calgary has one of the highest rates

of domestic violence in the country. Part of the CDVC's initiative is to bring this to the attention of the new mayor and make it a priority.

Like all of the candidates, Mayor Nenshi emphasized a community response model. Nenshi said that in any case of domestic homicide, it reflects a failure on behalf of the community.

"The community is here to help you," said Nenshi. "We must commit to building a community and society where people don't live in fear."

He said the issue lies in proper prevention methods for domestic violence issues.

"One of the questions that we really need to ask ourselves, is what, as a community, have we done well, and what as a community can we improve on," said Nenshi.

The inclusion of community-based

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organisations, faith groups, formal organisations and informal links is something Nenshi would like to encourage.

He said he likes the coordinated community-based response method because it involves everyone affected and is the only method of making change.

Nenshi acknowledged the discussion of domestic violence in Calgary as one that should have taken place years ago.

“Violence is violence. Domestic violence is violence. Any kind of violence is unacceptable in our community and in our society,” said Nenshi.

Nenshi’s response to the event was well received by Andrea Silverstone, chair of the CDVC and executive director of Peer Support Services for Abused Women.

Silverstone says the CDVC is hoping to have an opportunity to speak with Nenshi soon. “We were very pleased with Mayor Nenshi’s response at the October 5 event,” said Silverstone.

Immediately on the agenda to discuss with Nenshi, is what the CDVC and its partner agencies do in the community.

Silverstone says it is critical that City Hall continue its support of Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), and put forward more in the way of financial backing.

Currently, the five priorities for the CDVC to be addressed with the mayor are: homelessness, access to the justice system, poverty reduction, affordable housing and enough financial support that the domestic violence community can have the resources to work on the issue.

Nenshi said he has two key points he wants to emphasize. The first being “open, authentic dialogue,” where everyone is welcome to the table to communicate on what is and isn’t working.

The second is opportunity. Nenshi said he wants the same opportunities available to all Calgarians.

“If you’re living in fear, you do not have opportunity. This is something that we must address,” said Nenshi. **HF**

Dedicated PSP Volunteer Makes a Difference



Nora Habafy, volunteer for the HomeFront Partner Support Program.

Nora Habafy has been a dedicated volunteer with HomeFront since January, 2008. For three hours a week, Habafy works as a volunteer with HomeFront’s Partner Support Program (PSP) to make a difference in the lives of victims of domestic violence.

Developed to provide victims with resources and support while their current or former partner is on probation or under a no contact order, the Partner Support Program sees a volume

of about 100 referrals per month from women of multiple backgrounds. The goal of PSP is to enable victims to be the custodian of their own safety and assist them in developing the skills to recognize their right to safety.

Habafy came to HomeFront three years ago with a diverse educational background including a degree in Applied Anthropology with a focus on Women in Third World Development.

She has also spent time working with the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter (CWES) and fulfills a role as a board member with the Women’s Centre. Currently, Habafy works as the Outcomes Measurement Coordinator at Canadian Mental Health Association.

Habafy’s unique and diverse skill set is one well suited to her PSP volunteer position. Partnered with her background, Habafy also embodies the listening skills and compassion towards victims that has made her an invaluable asset to HomeFront and PSP.

With personal understanding of living between two cultures, Habafy says that she empathizes with women of different backgrounds and has always had an awareness and interest in women’s issues.

Born and raised in Morocco and having lived a number of years in the eastern United States, Habafy’s attention lies in cultural interactions involving women, specifically those affected by domestic violence.

“It’s the issue that hurts women the most,” said Habafy.

Through the skill of active listening and carefully directed questions, Habafy works hard to forge trust with clients of PSP, simply by getting the client to talk about their situation so she can realize her primary concern, which is the victim’s safety.

Carolee Israel-Turner, PSP Team Leader, says that Habafy embodies all of the core values of HomeFront, being a compassionate listener and pro-active problem solver.

“Her dedication and commitment to victims of domestic violence would rival any professional at any level,” said Israel-Turner.

Israel-Turner says that through all of this, Habafy remains humble and it is her strong wish that Habafy continue her relationship with HomeFront. **HF**

DCRT Pilot Takes Off

The Domestic Conflict Response Team (DCRT) is emerging from its infancy and entering a new stage.

Now in its second-year, the DCRT continues to bring Calgary's partners in justice together, working under one umbrella. As a result, direct, open-lines of communication between police, justice, and community partners, like HomeFront, are becoming both more efficient and effective in meeting the needs of the community.

Project manager of DCRT, Shannon Leigh says that one of the first priorities of the pilot was to re-evaluate methods of information exchange.

"[HomeFront] has a track record of working together well," says Leigh.

"However when taking on DCRT it became clear that some practices, like ways of sharing information in service of the client, weren't actually working."

Prior to the project, there was no reliable means of tracking a family's history and establishing a pattern of abuse.

What the major systems needed was an effective way to manage information about previous domestic conflicts that both respected the privacy of the client, and ensured the provision of effective intervention if situations warranted in the future.

New practices developed as a result of the DCRT pilot, allow the Calgary Police Service, HomeFront and Child and Family Services to provide risk assessment as quickly as 24 to 72 hours after an incident. This is a significant improvement to the sometimes lengthy processes prior to DCRT.

"Using a secure data exchange system, the incident information is shared, tracked and assessed much more easily," says Leigh.

Now, when a family living in the area served by DCRT

experiences domestic conflict, their complaint is reviewed and assigned quickly. An officer and a case worker then meet with the family and connect those in need to appropriate resources, hopefully reducing possible escalation and re-occurrence.

For Linda Rattai, with the Public Assistance Unit at the Crown's Office, the difference is dramatically noticeable.

In September, Rattai worked with DCRT and HomeFront's Early Intervention and Outreach Program while assisting a client dealing with potential emotional and financial abuse.

The complainant, a senior citizen was concerned for his safety, while the accused, a middle aged woman, vacated her possessions from his property.

During the time that the accused was present on the victim's property, an officer and a case worker over-saw the packing of her belongings and escorted her from the premises.

Rattai is certain that without the support of DCRT, the complainant wouldn't have been able to get the accused to move out of his residence.

"This wouldn't have taken place without the DCRT," says Rattai.

The accused, under a no-contact order, is currently living away from the complainant and there are no plans on behalf of the victim to allow the accused to return to living under the same roof. The victim is getting assistance from various resources, including a senior's resource centre to evaluate and improve his life.

Rattai says she was relieved the victim had the DCRT available as a resource, since his safety was a possible concern.

"I was pleased. I was very concerned for the complainant," says Rattai. **HF**

National Research Day 2010: Communities Collaborate to Resolve IPV

Upcoming this November 3-5, is the National Research Day 2010 conference, entitled, Engaging Our Communities: Working Together to End Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The conference will be hosted in New Brunswick at the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (MMFC).

Community organizations, government departments and academics from across Canada have been invited to participate in the event, sharing research and insights into IPV.

The goal of National Research Day is to provide a national forum to review programs and services designed to deal with IPV and exchange ideas about how to make improvements.

This year, HomeFront Executive Director, Kevin McNichol will be presenting. While this is McNichol's first time presenting at National Research Day, he says he is enthusiastic about the potential for collaboration with other agencies and communities from other provinces.

Using impact data and research, McNichol will be presenting alongside Dr. Leslie Tutty, PhD and member of the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work, on methods of further serving the provinces and demonstrating how the HomeFront model works.

While most provinces have a process which they have implemented for responding to domestic violence, there are still some that need to examine the idea of specialized courts.

"We're proving the principles we've applied work, and if

they apply them in their own community, we believe they will have the same success," said McNichol.

By outlining the three key principles HomeFront operates on, McNichol hopes to encourage other communities to adopt the philosophies as their own.

First, McNichol says it is crucial to address the victim and offender simultaneously and understand the dynamics of the relationship.

This is paired with the specialization of services, in order to address domestic violence by working in collaboration with police, justice and probation.

McNichol says communication is the most critical of the three steps. By getting all the services involved to communicate in an open fashion, he says it is easier to work on establishing safety for the family.

"We're not coming with a prescription that says if you do this, in this way, you'll have success," said McNichol.

"We come to them and say look, these are the principles, the philosophical foundational processes that we use, and if you can find ways to replicate those principles in your community, you can have this kind of success too."

Along with the presentation itself, McNichol says he is very interested to see the other outcome data from specialized courts across Canada. By sharing information and utilizing open communication, McNichol says everyone has the opportunity to enhance and optimize what they're doing at home. **HF**

Hi-5 10/11 Club Officer Helps Victim Find Safety



During the summer of 2007 a District 6 patrol officer responded to a domestic incident at a home with over twenty prior calls since 2002. The officer took measures to build a rapport with the victim, and was able to form a bond of trust with the woman. After determining a pattern of long-term abuse, the woman's partner was arrested, but the woman recanted her statement and the charges were stayed.

After numerous attempts to leave her abuser over the last three years, the officer went above and beyond, continuing to

stay in touch and offer support and by August 2010, the woman called to say she had left her abuser for good.

Having moved out of Calgary to live with her sister, the woman is safe and has no plans to return to her abusive partner. The officer received thank you cards from both the victim and her sister thanking him for his consistency and support over the years.

Sgt. John Guigon is the sergeant in charge of the Domestic Conflict Unit (DCU). DCU is a specialized unit within the Calgary Police Service, whose purpose is to deal with domestic conflicts.

Guigon says the key factor in the case involving the patrol officer and female victim was the officer's non-judgemental attitude.

Guigon says the offender had been charged numerous times, but after several missed court appearances and the victim's unwillingness to press charges, nothing was resolved. It was because the patrol officer involved in the 2007 call remained in touch with the victim, that she found the courage to leave her abuser.

"Most who get involved with the police actually just want to make a difference," said Guigon. "Making a difference at the end of the day is the most fulfilling part of the job." **HF**



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