

ON THE HOMEFRONT

10 Years
UNITED IN BREAKING THE CYCLE
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Thank you to **Dennis Potharst**
for volunteering his time to
write the Summer issue of
On the HomeFront.

A Milestone Year



Plaque Presentation Commemorating HomeFront's 10th Anniversary (from left to right: The Very Reverend Robert Pynn, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Alison Redford, HomeFront Board Co-Chair Brian Felesky, Minister of Children and Youth Services Yvonne Fritz, HomeFront Board Co-Chair Bev Longstaff & Kevin McNichol)

HomeFront's tenth anniversary celebration on June 9 was not only an occasion to commemorate the agency's many milestones, but an opportunity to look ahead at continuing to improve the lives of those affected by domestic violence.

With more than 250 guests, including HomeFront's collaborative partners, corporate sponsors and government officials, the evening was centered on the theme of 'looking backward in order to move forward.' The gala also kicked off the second annual Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference held at the University of Calgary on June 10 and 11.

Minister of Children and Youth Services Yvonne Fritz was on hand to present

HomeFront with a plaque in recognition of their achievements during the past decade.

With creative and effective initiatives such as the specialized domestic violence court, the Early Intervention and Outreach Program and the Partner Support Program, HomeFront has built a solid foundation to stop domestic violence where it begins. The collaborative response model that HomeFront worked to expand province-wide is a further indicator of the agency's commitment and determination to provide a coordinated response to domestic violence.

Copies of the 2010 Report to the Community provided guests with a summary of HomeFront's top ten achievements during their storied ten year history.

Kevin McNichol, executive director of HomeFront, says he was pleased with the turnout for the evening celebration, which included a wide range of individuals with varying backgrounds and connections to HomeFront.

"It was a wonderful success," he says. "It was great to be in a room full of people who we had worked with over the years – both past and present. It was wonderful to hear the different conversations that were going on around the room with so many of the originators [of HomeFront] there."

McNichol adds the energy in the room among the guests in attendance proved what HomeFront has always meant to him.

"That collective spirit makes the difference – to me, that is what makes HomeFront special."

HomeFront would like to thank all partners, donors, staff, board members, volunteers and community agencies in celebrating this special milestone. **HF**

HomeFront

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Domestic Homicide Conference Focused on Prevention Strategies

National and international experts in the area of domestic homicide shared strategies, knowledge and insight towards preventing this crime at the second annual Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference held on June 10 and 11.

With nearly 300 delegates in attendance, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Alison Redford Q.C kicked off the two-day conference that featured renowned practitioners, researchers and policy makers on topics ranging from familicide – a type of murder that involves the death of a spouse and a child in a family – to international perspectives and the assessment and prevention of domestic homicide.

Delegates such as Staff Sgt. Patty McCallum with the Domestic Conflict Unit of the Calgary Police Service says notable instances of familicide in Calgary within the past two years has encouraged the unit to increase their knowledge and familiarity of these disturbing cases.

“When it is families that are harmed, it is important that police are well-informed on this type of offense, so we can help the community better understand why these horrific incidents happen,” McCallum says. “By attending the conference, our unit has gained an appreciation for the crucial role we play in preventing this crime.”

The diversity and depth of subject matter at the conference held a degree of significance for Judy Mackay, with the Criminal Justice Division of Alberta Justice. Currently involved on a provincial committee dealing with family violence and bullying, Mackay says the opportunity to gather information on death reviews and network with other agencies was beneficial to her research with the Government of Alberta.

“The conference was timely, as it provided additional information about how these committees vary in structure and their advantages and disadvantages,” Mackay says.

Christine Berry, Director, Family Violence Prevention Initiatives at the Calgary Counselling Centre, says Dr. Stephen Hart delivered a notable presentation on perpetrator risk and victim vulnerability that emphasized the importance of proactive measures to prevent domestic homicide.

“I was very impressed with Dr. Stephen Hart’s presentation on risk assessment,” Berry says.

“Much of the research and tools that came out of the conference underscores and solidifies the work I am doing at the Calgary Counselling Centre, including the training I provide to our new residents and interns,” she says.

Hosted by HomeFront and the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Social Work, the conference provided important collaboration and information gathering opportunities for delegates from all across Canada, encouraging professionals to work together and find solutions that will ultimately prevent this horrific crime from occurring in our country.

On behalf of the conference committee, HomeFront would like to thank the presenters and delegates for attending, as well as the volunteers, co-hosts and sponsors for their remarkable contribution. **HF**

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Mayoral Candidates Can Take Lead to Ensure a Safe Community

With the mayoral race now in full-swing in Calgary, issues such as domestic violence continue to maintain a low profile among candidates and voters alike.

Kevin McNichol, executive director of HomeFront, says the role of mayor comes with the responsibility of ensuring that the public at large lives in a safe city, which also includes personal safety within the confines of one’s home.

“What goes into having a good community and a safe community is certainly part of the city’s responsibility,”

McNichol says.

Last year, Alberta had the second highest recorded rate of domestic violence in Canada, with Calgary having one of the highest rates of domestic homicides among Canadian cities. In response to this, the province announced in June that more than \$2 million in funding will be dedicated to the prevention of domestic violence in Alberta. HomeFront received a portion of that funding for its High Risk Management Initiative, or HRMI, which seeks to reduce long term domestic violence rates.

“We have a major criminal problem and a major social problem called domestic violence, and for those reasons I think it needs to be on their [the candidates’] radar,” McNichol says.

“Any way that the city and the mayor can lead the charge on this particular issue will go a long way towards reducing these problems.”

He says that having healthy homes and communities is inextricably linked to having a healthy and prosperous city.

“A lot of violence prevention really is talking about healthy relationships: making it safe for people to go to school, making it safe for people to be in their homes, making it safe to come to work – sending the message that this is everybody’s problem, and that this happens in your house, in our community, and we don’t want that anymore.”

McNichol adds that he would like voters to consider a



candidate who is not only concerned with the economic demands of a growing city, but who also has an awareness of the underlying social issues that often lurk below the surface of a prosperous urban centre.

“I hope that the everyday voter would be looking for a candidate who is sensitive to the people,” he says.

“It’s great that we continue to improve roads and infrastructure but if we don’t have healthy and happy people using those services, it doesn’t make for a very great city.”

In addition to public awareness initiatives, McNichol says municipal government can further work to reduce domestic violence by sustaining policing budgets, funding social service agencies and programs and providing suitable housing for non-profits throughout the city.

“Ultimately, our next mayor can be a leader on addressing this issue by personally taking a stand against domestic violence and sending a message that this type of behavior will not be tolerated”. **HF**

Staff Member Honoured with 2010 Tulip Award



Carolee Israel-Turner (left) receives the Community Partnership Award at the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter 2010 Tulip Awards. Carolee received the award from Sharon Hapton of the Soup Sisters, a great supporter of Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter.

Although hesitant to accept recognition for her individual efforts, Carolee Israel-Turner embodies the collaborative and team-driven approach that HomeFront was built on.

Honoured for her work with the Partner Support Program – a HomeFront initiative that provides support and referrals to domestic violence victims whose past or current partners are under a no contact order or a probation order – Israel-Turner was recently the recipient of the Community Partnership Award from the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter at their 2010 Tulip Awards.

She says she had mixed feelings when the winners were announced and she was one of them.

“I was both shocked and humbled,” she says, citing a recent case she was involved with in assisting a challenging client. Israel-Turner says much of her work entails frequent phone

calls and liaising with other agencies in order to assist victims. She was surprised that her determined efforts could result in an award.

Liz Frazer, human resources coordinator with HomeFront, says Israel-Turner is a deserving recipient for a Tulip Award due to her dedication and commitment to the job.

“Carolee has a special way of getting to the heart of issues with clients, while earning the respect of professionals,” Frazer says.

“Clients feel safe telling Carolee what is really going on, and professionals know they will get straight answers and honest information from her as well.”

With an educational background in psychology and criminology, Israel-Turner became involved with the Partner Support Program in 2006. Now, as team lead for the initiative, she has seen the program evolve and grow considerably.

“When I started in October of 2006, it was a program that was run by volunteers,” she says, adding that what began as a program with one paid staff member and a group of volunteers has grown into a larger entity that is responsible for areas such as treatment, high-risk management, social marketing and public awareness, training and increased contact with criminal justice partners.

Program referrals range from 60 to 100 in any given month. Increased availability of staff outside office hours and the delivery of multi-lingual services have allowed HomeFront to reach more clients and reduce access barriers.

Not one to back down from a challenge, Israel-Turner is competing in the Strathmore Women’s Triathlon this summer. Admittedly not a strong swimmer, she saw this as an opportunity to overcome her fear and bounce back from illness after a friend convinced her to sign up and participate.

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"I've been sick for so many years that the minute I got the all clear in January I went, 'I want to do something for me,'" she says. "Where I master my body and not the other way around."

Despite the many successes of the Partner Support Program, one challenge the initiative has faced is its overall purpose and establishing its own identity.

"One of the biggest struggles our program has had was to gain credibility," she says. "The program was an off-shoot of probation for the longest time, but we have worked hard to develop an identity at HomeFront."

"As a team, we have really come together. We have identity, we have purpose, and we are beginning to realize the difference we are making in the lives of our clients." **HF**

Hi-5 10/11 Club Officer Commended for Assisting Victim

The impact of domestic violence came to the forefront for a patrol officer in District Six during the summer of 2007. Responding to a domestic call at an address with more than 20 previous domestic reports since 2002, the officer took immediate steps to put the victim at ease by being understanding and forming a level of trust with the woman. During the course of the investigation, the officer determined that there had been a pattern of long-term abuse in the household. As a result, the woman's partner was arrested and charged with a number of domestic-related charges.

Although the case went to court, the victim recanted her statement and the charges against her partner were subsequently stayed. Despite this, the responding officer in this case demonstrated dedication and commitment to reaching out to the woman, advising her to contact him anytime if she had to. In fact, the officer kept in regular contact with the woman for the

next three years.

Then, in June 2010, the officer received a call from the woman, saying she was ready to move forward and end her abusive relationship. Making arrangements with local agencies, shelters and other resources, the officer took active steps to ensure the woman's safety. Unfortunately, she made the decision to not enter the shelter system and opted to stay with her partner. Although disappointed with the decision, the officer assured the woman that when she is ready, he will once again be there to help her in any way he can.

The Domestic Conflict Unit commends this officer for going above and beyond to assist the victim, in a case which exemplifies the often unique challenges of this crime. The officer's actions exemplify the values of dedication and compassion. **HF**



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