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

Honouring our Unsung Heroes

The ninth annual HomeFront Selinger Awards celebrated the achievements of frontline workers and volunteers in the field of domestic violence with an elegant evening held at the Jack Singer Concert Hall on November 17.

A tribute to this year's theme of reflection, the evening opened up with a brief video dedicated to frontline workers, followed by an opening toast from Chief of Police Rick Hanson to the audience of about 150. Hanson began the evening by acknowledging the diligent work of those working on the frontline.

"What I love about HomeFront are the frontline workers," he says. "It is an honour to me to be associated with people like that – we salute you for what you do all the time."

Each year, the awards ceremony recognizes the courage and dedication of frontline workers and volunteers. Nominated by members of the community, including social and governmental agencies, law enforcement and the judicial system, three individuals are selected from a panel of independent judges to receive an award from one of three categories – Community Frontline, Justice/Law Enforcement and Volunteer.

Prior to the awards being presented, provincial court judge Sherry Van de Veen took a minute to praise the event's namesake Jerry Selinger with creating the specialized domestic violence court. Van de Veen noted the old court system as being hamstrung and unable to address the special needs that domestic conflict issues require. She congratulated all nominees for their exemplary efforts, comparing them to Olympians.

"Every one of the nominees are Olympians in my eyes. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart," she says.

Heather Battle of Alberta Health Services presented the Community Frontline award to Dr. Pauline Head. As an emergency physician, Head was instrumental in the creation of a specialized sexual assault team in Calgary. Battle says that Head "has made sacrifices in her own professional and personal life to assure care would be there for victims."

Staff Sgt. Patty McCallum of the Calgary Police Service presented the Justice/Law Enforcement award to Const. Dan Walker of the CPS Domestic Conflict Unit. His nominator, Danielle Dufour with Community Corrections (Probation), said Walker "demonstrates a strong commitment to ending violence within Calgary families." As Walker was not in attendance, a pre-taped video was shown where he thanked everyone for the award, and added that full-time monitoring of offenders is a key factor to preventing future violence and abuse. His wife and two children accepted the award on his behalf.

The Volunteer award recipient this year was Jane Oxenbury,

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Dr. Pauline Head,
Community Frontline Recipient



Constable Dan Walker,
Justice/Law Enforcement Recipient



Jane Oxenbury,
Volunteer Award Recipient

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counsellor with Edan Counselling Associates. A tireless volunteer, she has dedicated many hours to improving the lives of others, particularly in the specialization of same-sex violence and abuse. Nominator Melissa Luthanen says Oxenbury deserves special recognition for her lifetime of effort to this end. Recalling a poignant story of a recent client, Oxenbury finds satisfaction in

helping others restore their hope and happiness.

“I was able to make someone so damaged actually smile today – twice,” she said.

HomeFront would like to extend congratulations to all nominees of the 2009 Selinger Awards, and look forward to seeing you again next year for our tenth anniversary. **HF**

Initiating a Proactive Response to Domestic Violence

A new initiative to provide support and intervention to families who are at risk of domestic violence is now feasible thanks to a funding announcement by the province dedicated to the reduction and prevention of crime in Alberta.

Earlier this year, HomeFront was granted funding through the Alberta government’s Safe Communities Innovation Fund for the creation of the Domestic Conflict Response Team, or DCRT. A partnership with Calgary Child and Family Services and the Calgary Police Service, the pilot project pairs HomeFront caseworkers with Calgary police officers to provide support and referrals to at-risk families who are vulnerable to ongoing or potential domestic-related violence.

Janis Tarchuk, Minister of Children and Youth Services, says the project is a major step in providing an essential resource to address family violence and abuse in the community.

“This project builds on existing effective collaborative services and will provide additional help for families to make positive changes in their lives to end the cycle of violence,” Tarchuk says.

The funding announcement was made at a press conference in Calgary on December 4. A total of \$1.5 million over three years has been allocated for the program.

According to Shannon Leigh, DCRT project manager,

since the program began in September, two teams – each with a caseworker and police officer – have responded to approximately 40-50 cases over a two-month period. Leigh says the significance of the project lies in its ability to be proactive and intervene with families who are at highest risk.

“The goal is to intervene when violence is present, when the situation is chronic or when there is a high risk of becoming violent,” she says.

Chief of Police Rick Hanson also echoes the importance of the specialized teams in responding to the needs of at-risk families before problems escalate.

“The intent of these teams is to make contact with families proactively rather than reactively. We want to provide support and resources before violence occurs and before they find themselves entering the justice system,” Hanson says.

With plans to expand the DCRT in the future, Leigh praises the project for its effective collaborative model and focus on partnership to ensure safe communities.

“This partnership can really build bridges between the public and the police. I think this will become a model for other communities as well,” she says. **HF**

All it Takes is One Call: Connect Family & Sexual Abuse Network

Individuals affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse now have an enhanced way to connect to vital services in Calgary.

The Connect Family and Sexual Abuse Network provides a single point of contact for individuals and families affected by violence. A collaborative effort among healthcare, police and social service agencies, Connect is focused on providing immediate assistance all through a central telephone number.

Formerly known as the Calgary Collaborative Services Centre, or CCSC, Connect will now offer assistance and referrals for domestic violence and sexual assault concerns 24 hours a day. Housed in the new Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre in downtown Calgary, the rebranded Connect service will give clients more efficient and responsive service.

Debra Tomlinson, project manager with the Collaborative Services Centre, says the aim of Connect is to ensure that individuals receive the appropriate resources as soon as they need it.

“We have one goal in mind – to make the victim feel they are safe and have hope for the future,” Tomlinson says.

She adds that a concern for many clients she has worked with is the frustration of retelling their story to different agencies

in a disorganized system. Connect, along with a multitude of partners including HomeFront, will effectively solve this.

Modelled on programs in the U.S. such as the Family Advocacy Centers in Phoenix and San Diego, an initial concept for Connect began under the CCSC in 2001-02. It was not until last year that Connect came to fruition.

Tomlinson praises the work of local service providers in creating a comprehensive pool of resources to assist individuals at all levels, and believes this not only improves internal working relationships, but clients as well.

“Clients will truly get the best of the best. It’s a win-win for everybody.”

Connect Family and Sexual Abuse Network can be contacted via their newly launched website at www.connectnetwork.ca, or by phone at (403) 237-5888 in Calgary or (877) 237-5888 in Alberta. **HF**



HomeFront Recognized for Innovation in Social Work



Early Intervention and Outreach Team: (From left to right)
Patti Knot, Suzanne DuGray, Sarah Witt, Yvonne Secord

HomeFront's Early Intervention and Outreach (EI&O) team took home the Innovation in Social Work award at the seventh annual Pulse of Social Work awards held in October.

In an effort to reduce the potential risk of domestic conflict among individuals, children and families, the EI&O team demonstrated innovation for their collaborative approach to early intervention in non-crisis domestic conflict situations. Developed in 2005, the program is a partnership between HomeFront, the Calgary Police Service and Calgary and Area Child and Family Services.

In an average year, the Calgary Police Service reports 13,000 domestic violence calls for service. As each of these calls may not necessarily translate into charges being laid, roughly two-

thirds often go unmonitored. It is at this stage where the EI&O team is unique – its use of resiliency initiatives, which is an approach to identify existing strengths and curtail future challenges, lessens the potential of repeat conflict due to its early intervention technique.

Suzanne DuGray with HomeFront's EI&O team, says the partnership is effective in that it serves a large demographic that would otherwise go unnoticed.

"Prior to this program, people were not being properly looked after. As a service that is collaborative and free of charge, it is a quality thing to offer," DuGray says.

According to HomeFront, the EI&O program has reported a decrease in the escalation of violence since its inception, with less than two per cent requiring further police intervention after the team's involvement.

Hosted by the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work, the awards ceremony honours social workers from Calgary and area for their dedication to individuals, families and communities.

DuGray credits her colleagues for their hard work and commitment in making the program a success. They include HomeFront's Sarah Witt, Calgary and Area Child and Family Service's Yvonne Secord and Patti Knott of the Calgary Police Service.

Although hesitant to accept praise for winning the award, DuGray is proud of her involvement with an exceptional program.

"It felt lovely [to win the award] – I don't expect recognition as I'm very passionate about what I do. It's a reward in itself," she says. **HF**

Officers Ensure Safety in Hi 5 10/11 Case

Officers from District 8 in southeast Calgary responded to a domestic complaint call from a woman's children fearing for their mother's safety. The incident began with a verbal argument between the woman and her husband, which led to him punching her repeatedly, throwing her down the stairs and strangling her in front of her children.

The responding officers coordinated a thorough and effective investigation from the start, focusing on immediate treatment for the woman and ensuring her safety and that of her children. The seriousness of the assault was apparent to the officers after being told by the victim that she had been with her husband for 19 years with no previous history of physical abuse.

Rather than placing the woman and her children in a crisis shelter, the officers arranged for an emergency protection order that would allow them to stay in the home while the officers implemented a plan to capture the offender.

Prior to the end of their shift, the officers involved ensured all pertinent details of the case were passed on to following

shifts in order to apprehend the offender as quickly as possible. However, when the officers returned to duty, they had learned the accused had not yet been arrested, and picked up the investigation where it left off. Soon after, they realized the offender had been hospitalized in life-threatening condition due to a failed suicide attempt. Due to the serious nature of the incident, it was at this point that the officers contacted the Domestic Conflict Unit to manage the investigation going forward.

In this case, the responding officers demonstrated commitment to the victim's safety by recognizing the seriousness of the offence, and the importance of safety planning. They also showed dedication to the file and to the family involved.

Although the victim is having difficulty coping with the situation, the DCU and HomeFront continue to assist the victim by utilizing resources from the Sherriff King Home for her and her children. **HF**

HOMEFRONT

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