

Domestic Violence Claimed 55 Lives in Wisconsin in 2013



Wisconsin Domestic Violence

Homicide Report

2013

Published September 2014

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Foreword

This is the twelfth *Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report*. Since 2000, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse) has chronicled and analyzed domestic violence killings in our state. However to all of us at End Abuse, this year's report is unlike any other; it contains the name of our friend and colleague, Trish Waschbisch, a domestic violence victim advocate who was killed by her boyfriend in 2013.

From a purely personal vantage point, we would find comfort in using the report as a space for recounting our deep admiration and our many fond memories of Trish. However, that would perhaps be unfair. There are 38 other victims included in this report who would not have the same opportunity to have this chronicle provide an account of their good deeds and those memories their families and friends hold dear. Indeed, we have known that a report such as this, which is organized around victims' deaths, cannot begin to capture the fullness of these victims' lives. That inescapable shortcoming of this report, or any homicide report, is painfully obvious when we think about Trish, the vibrant woman we knew, and compare that memory to the matter-of-fact hollowness of the narrative that describes her death.

And yet we continue to publish this report because, like Trish, we are advocates for victims of domestic violence. We hope that calling attention to the several dozen deadly incidents of domestic violence each year in Wisconsin will help galvanize resolve to address this social disorder, a phenomenon that steals lives and profoundly touches loved ones. It also affects thousands of Wisconsinites who are not listed in these pages because they survive.

While we continue on, we are unable to write this report in the same way we have written the others. Report writing requires a level of detachment. A report writer is an expert, someone with a measure of distance between herself and the subject upon which she reports. She steps back, looks objectively and, with knowledge and data, relays what she sees. Rather than attempt to again assume that role, we have chosen to put aside the neutral, impersonal voice of the author. As grieving friends and colleagues, we don't have the luxury of distance. Trish's death makes clear that we were never apart from and always bound together with the innumerable Wisconsinites who are touched by domestic violence homicide. Therefore, we have decided to ask others for their insights and analysis to fill these pages. Contained herein are the thoughts and reflections of advocates, family members, community leaders and others. Together we name our loss, grapple with our grief and envision a more peaceful future.

Executive Summary

Continuing with the work launched in 2000 with publication of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin's first *Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report*, this edition details domestic violence-related homicides that occurred in the calendar year 2013.¹ This brief accounting in no way represents the victims' full lives. That would require a far more detailed inquiry, in-depth study of official case records, and conversations with family and friends left behind. Within the limitations of readily available public information, we have endeavored to construct as accurate a description as possible of key events and circumstances related to each homicide.²

In 2013, there were 38 domestic violence homicide incidents resulting in 53 deaths: 39 victims, 10 perpetrator suicides following the homicide, and four homicides by legal intervention. Additionally, there were two perpetrator suicides in the context of a potentially fatal domestic violence incident involving law enforcement, making 55 the total count of lives lost due to domestic violence in Wisconsin in 2013.

2013 Compared to 2011 & 2012	2011	2012	2013
Incidents of domestic violence homicide	31	38	38
Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention)	32	48	39
Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement)	2	0	4
All domestic violence-related homicides	34	48	43
Perpetrator suicide (excluding by legal intervention)	3	4	12
Total deaths (victim and perpetrator)	37	52	55

Other aspects of domestic violence-related homicide in 2013 include:

- There were on average over three domestic violence homicide victims per month (3.25 victim deaths per month) in Wisconsin. This rate is a slight decrease compared to 2012 and 2011. Over that two-year period, there was an average of 3.33 domestic violence homicide victims each month.
- Perpetrators of domestic violence homicide incidents were overwhelmingly male. In 2013, 79% of perpetrators were male. This figure excludes homicides by legal intervention.
- In 2013, there was only one identified domestic violence-related homicide of a child, which is a significant decrease from the 2011-2012 report, in which children killed by their fathers or other adult male household member accounted for close to one quarter of all domestic violence homicide victims. In cases of child deaths, it can be especially hard to discern if there was any domestic violence history between the adult couple. If we are unable to find any information that speaks to the presence of domestic violence in these cases, we opt not to include them in our report.
- In 2013, 16 of 35 or 46% of victims of intimate partner-related homicide were killed after the relationship ended or when one person in the relationship was taking steps to leave the relationship.
- Victims reflected the span of life, from six years old to 79 years old. The average age of victims was 40 years old.

1 Homicides were considered "domestic" if the victims and perpetrators were spouses or partners, former spouses or former partners, adults with children in common, adults or teens who had been in a dating relationship, or adult family members (e.g., parents killed by an adult child). Homicides of children by parents are included if facts indicate the violence directed at the child was connected to on-going intimate partner violence. Homicides of others were also included if the circumstances of the murder included a perpetrator's attack on someone connected with a current or former partner, such as a new partner or friend or family member. The report also includes homicides of domestic violence perpetrators that occur as their victims acted in self-defense, as well as those that occurred as a result of legal intervention. See *Methodology* for additional information on definitions and criteria.

2 Primary sources include news media (print and internet editions) and Wisconsin Circuit Court Access records.

- In 2013, homicides occurred in 22 separate counties in Wisconsin. Approximately half of the homicide incidents occurred in rural areas and half in urban areas.
- The months of August and December 2013 saw the most domestic violence-related deaths. Eight lives were lost in August and seven in December. The lives lost in these two months alone account for nearly 28% of all domestic violence-related deaths in 2013.
- In 2013, there was a known prior history of domestic violence by the perpetrator against either the homicide victim or another person in about half of the homicide cases. Any history of domestic violence remains unknown in most of the other cases.
- Consistent with the findings through this report's history, firearms are still the most common means of perpetration in domestic violence homicides. In 2013, firearms were the weapon used in 51% (20) of the domestic violence homicide incidents, excluding homicides by legal intervention. In at least seven domestic violence shooting deaths, the gunmen were legally prohibited from possessing firearms.
- Many of the 2013 homicide cases reflect the risk factors that research has found to be particularly associated with lethal violence.³ These include, among other factors: threats to use or actual use of a weapon, threats to kill, stalking, strangulation, obsessive jealousy and forced sex.

While intimate partner homicide rates overall have declined nationally for all race and gender groups in the past thirty years, the decline has varied significantly for different populations. According to data compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, between 1976 and 2005, "the number of black males killed by intimates dropped by 83%, white males by 61%, black females by 52%, and white females by 6%." This downward trend has been attributed to increased awareness, services and intervention.

This report is different from those we have previously published. Instead of developing analysis around key themes in our data, we have included contributions from advocates, leaders and other stakeholders. These contributors, from their personal and professional perspectives, discuss the consequences of domestic abuse and chart pathways to a safer future. We realize that the contributions included herein are not, and cannot be, a comprehensive representation of all the efforts currently underway to prevent domestic violence in Wisconsin. Indeed, it is to the credit of this state that there are more noteworthy initiatives than could be described in a single report. See the foreword above for more information on the uniqueness of this edition of the report. As always, our intent with this report is to honor the victims of domestic violence homicide and help Wisconsin communities create opportunities for intervention and prevention. We hope to inspire community members to get involved in efforts to prevent domestic violence.

³ For a summary of key factors, see the "Practitioners' Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases," in *The Blueprint for Safety: An Interagency Response to Domestic Violence Crimes*, Praxis International, 2010; www.praxisinternational.org.

⁴ Cooper, Alexia, and Erica L. Smith. "Homicide Trends in the United States, 1980-2008." Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Department of Justice. Reports & Trends. Washington, DC: BJS (2011): 36.

Key Findings

Overview

	2013
Domestic violence homicide incidents	38
Victims of domestic violence homicide (excluding by legal intervention)	39
Homicides by legal intervention (responding law enforcement)	4
All domestic violence-related homicides	42
Homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide	10
Perpetrator suicide in context of potentially fatal domestic violence incident	2
Total deaths (victim and perpetrator)	55
Homicide incidents with two or more victims	1
Female victims	25
Male victims	14
Female perpetrators	8
Male perpetrators	30

Relationship of victim to male perpetrator

When perpetrator was male, victim was:	2013
Current female partner	19
Current male partner	1
Former or estranged female partner	4
Perpetrator's child (and child of current or former female partner)	1
New male partner or male otherwise known to the perpetrator's former or estranged female partner	2
Father of perpetrator	2
Mother of perpetrator	1
Step-father of perpetrator	1

Relationship of victim to female perpetrator

When perpetrator was female, victim was:	2013
Current male partner	7
Estranged male partner	1

Homicide-suicide

	2013
Homicide incidents with perpetrator suicide	10
Perpetrator suicide in front of law enforcement in the context of a potential homicide	2
Homicide-suicide incidents involving firearms	10
Male perpetrator/suicide	10
Female perpetrator/suicide	0

Impact on children

	2013
Children killed (under age 18)	1
Children at the scene of an adult homicide	7
Minor children orphaned	3
Minor children left motherless	24
Minor children left fatherless	5

Separation

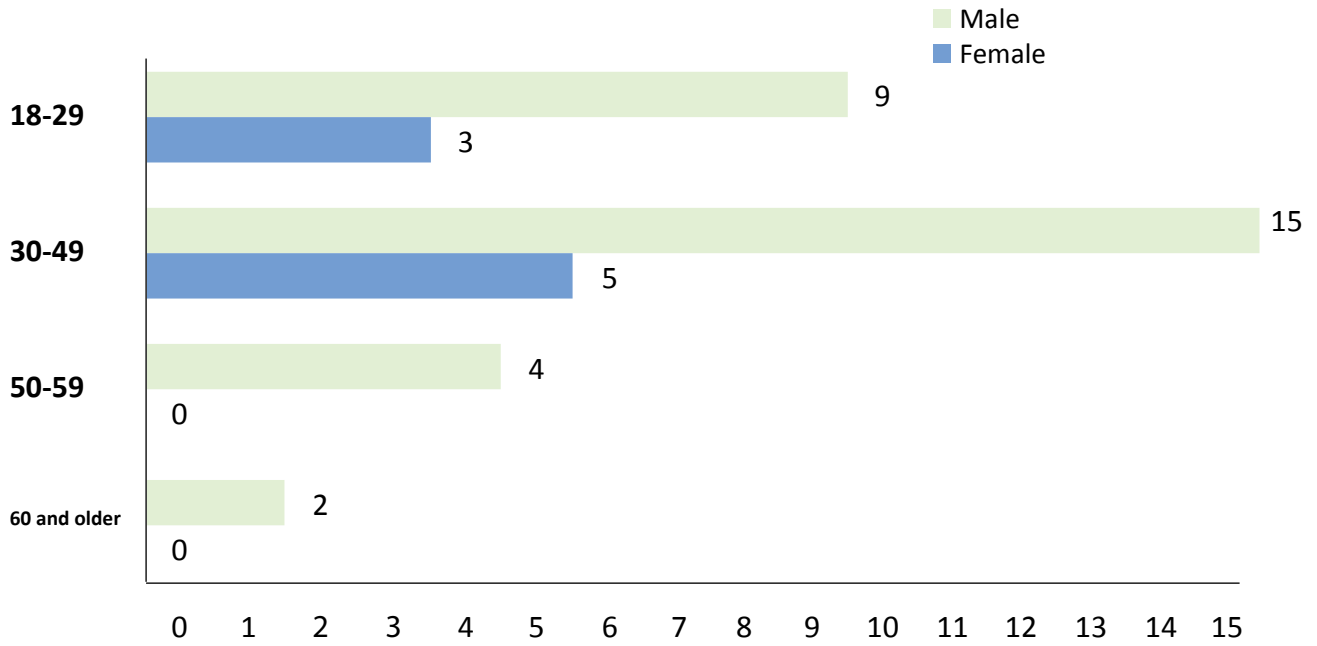
By incident (intimate partner related)	2013
Divorced, pending divorce or separation	7
Unmarried and separated or ending/leaving the relationship	9
Unknown if action to end/leave relationship	17

Prior History

By incident (intimate partner related)	2013
Known prior history with homicide victim	20
Known prior history with other victim(s)	7
Prior history with this and any victim are both unknown	7
Known history of domestic violence by suspect killed during legal intervention	1

- Ending the relationship means that the victim in the homicide or someone the victim was connected to, such as a new partner or family member, had taken some step to end the relationship, such as moving out temporarily or filing for divorce, or had taken an action that was perceived by the perpetrator as ending the relationship.

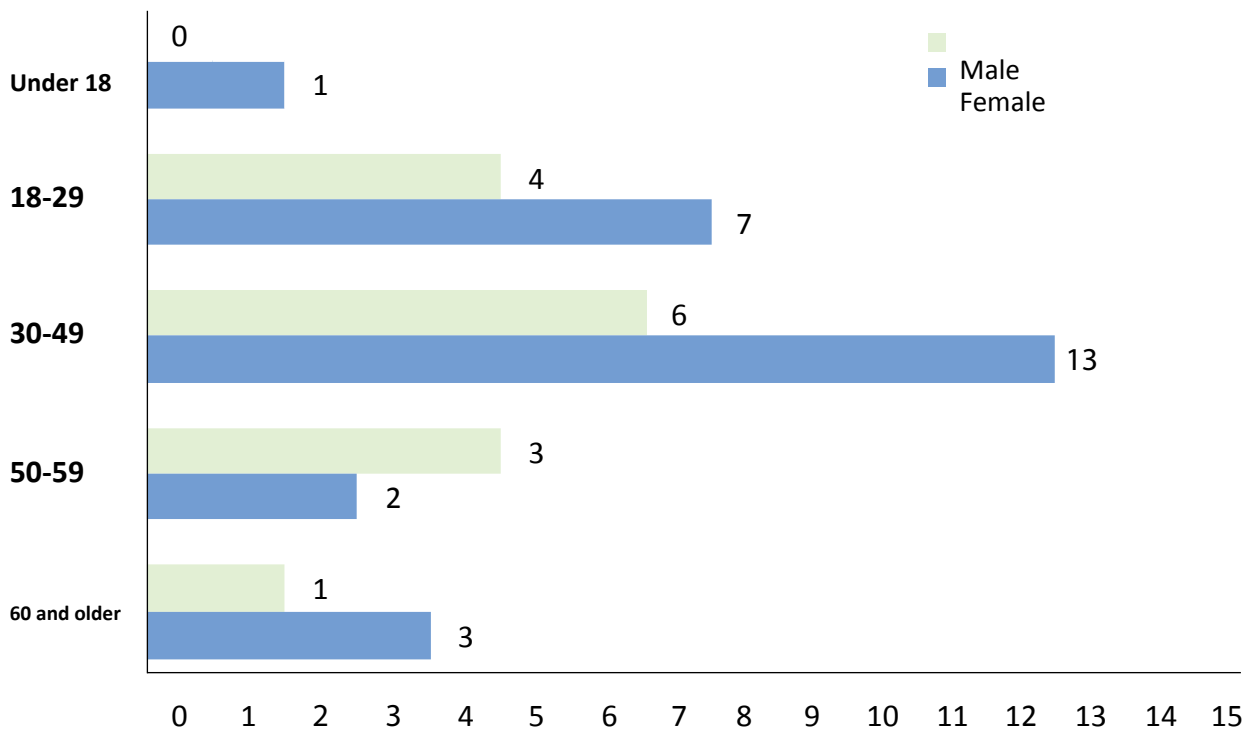
Age & Gender of Perpetrators



30 male perpetrators of homicide
 8 female perpetrators of homicide
38 total perpetrators of homicide

Perpetrator count excludes homicides by legal intervention (4) and perpetrator suicides in the context of a potentially fatal DV incident (2).

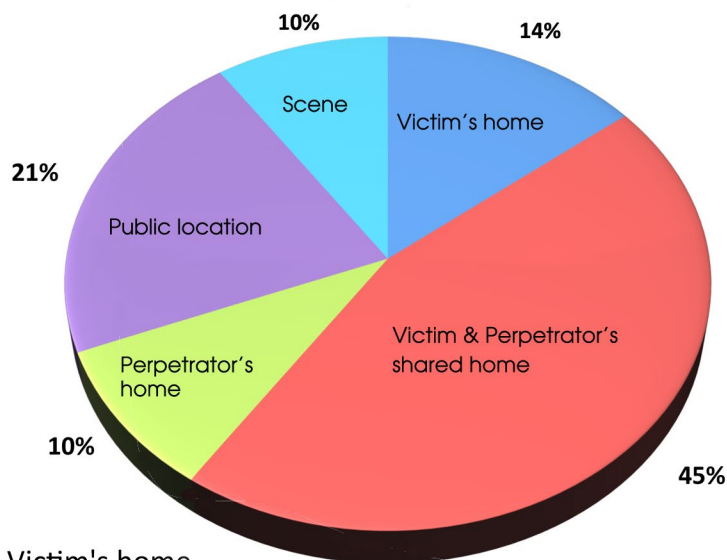
Age & Gender of Victims



14 total male victims
 25 female victims
39 total victims

Victim count excludes homicides by legal intervention (4) and perpetrator suicides in the context of a potentially fatal DV incident (2).

Location of Homicide Incidents (percentage of total)



- Victim's home
- Victim & perpetrator's shared home
- Perpetrator's home
- Public location (e.g., yard, street, park, motel, parking lot, medical facility)
- Scene where officers were responding to 911 call

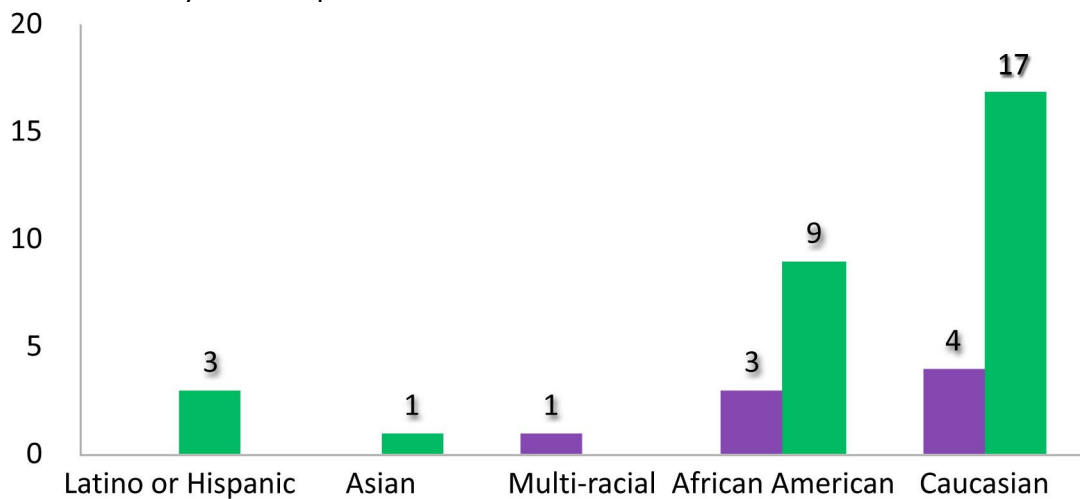
43 incidents include homicides by legal intervention.

Method of Homicides (percentage of total; count)

Percentage of incidents	2013
Shot	51% (20)
Stabbed or cut	31% (12)
Beaten or assaulted by being punched, pushed or bludgeoned	7% (3)
Strangled or asphyxiated	5% (2)
Ran over with car	2.5% (1)
Unknown	2.5% (1)

Method count excludes homicides by legal intervention (4).

Race or Ethnicity of Perpetrators

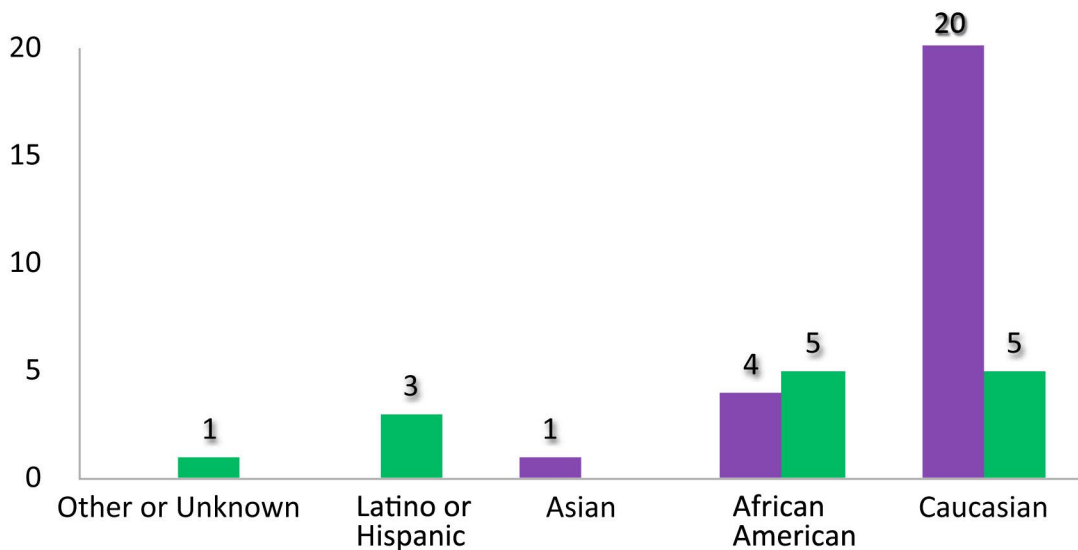


30 male perpetrators
 8 female perpetrators
38 total perpetrators

Female
 Male

Perpetrator count excludes homicides by legal intervention (4) and perpetrator suicides in the context of a potentially fatal DV incident (2).

Race or Ethnicity of Victims



14 male victims
 25 female victims
39 total victims

Female
 Male

Victim count excludes homicides by legal intervention (4) and perpetrator suicides in the context of a potentially fatal DV incident (2).

2013 Domestic Violence Homicides

...she was a person, she wasn't just a victim of a crime. [Her daughter] wasn't just some little girl that was killed. They were people. They were so much to so many people. They were people who had lives and people who cared for them.

All accounts and discussions of the homicides included in this report should be read with these words from surviving family members in mind. It is far too easy to reduce people's lives to either a sensational story or a dry statistic.

The accounts of the domestic violence homicides included in this report, as in past reports, are compiled from information that is readily available via public sources and limited follow-up inquiries. The amount of attention such sources pay to one domestic violence-related homicide in comparison to another varies greatly. Hence, the detail available to address each homicide varies greatly. Clearly, these brief descriptions in no way reflect the complexity and circumstances of each person's death. They certainly do not capture the complexities and fullness of their lives and the impact that each homicide or suicide has on surviving family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, communities and those responding and attempting to help, during the immediate event or in the time preceding it.

NOTE: Perpetrators and defendants are identified according to news accounts and public records, including persons charged with a crime where the case remains open. Case status reflects information available at the time of publication of this report. The current status of an open case can be found via Wisconsin Circuit Court Access at: <http://wcca.wicourts.gov/index.xsl>.

Individuals' ages are listed as of the date of the homicide.

County

In the death of...

ADAMS

Big Flats – February 19, 2013

The lone fatality in this case was the death of the perpetrator by suicide. The West Allis Police Department was notified of a woman missing under suspicious circumstances. Officers received information that the woman and her 55-year-old husband, Thomas Costigan, had recent marital problems, resulting in a no contact order being in place. Her family asked police to check for her at a cabin in Big Flats. When officers responded and entered the home, they found Costigan armed with a handgun. The officers gave Costigan verbal commands to drop the weapon, but instead he opened fire, injuring one of the deputies. Costigan then shot himself and later died from his injury. His wife was found at the residence unharmed. Court records show Costigan had a violent past. Three weeks prior to this incident, he was charged with a domestic abuse count of disorderly conduct. The criminal complaint in that case said that Costigan grabbed his wife's neck, pointed a knife at her and threatened to kill her.

ADAMS

Toni Voss, 27, Adams – March 2, 2013

Early in the morning, Coleman Dybul, 28, shot and killed his girlfriend, Toni Voss, during an episode of post-traumatic stress disorder-induced panic. In the middle of the night, Voss had gotten out of bed to get her son a glass of milk while Dybul was asleep. When she returned to the bedroom, he woke from the noise and, believing Voss was still in bed, thought someone was attacking her. He kept a loaded shotgun next to the bed, which he grabbed and fired. Dybul was a Marine and had been deployed to Afghanistan. He was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. He also took prescription pills for sleep aid regularly, including on the night of the homicide. Though he was being treated for opiate addiction, Dybul says he was not under the influence of any drugs or alcohol that were not prescribed on the night of the incident. He was charged with second-degree reckless homicide and found guilty but not guilty due to mental disease/defect.

BAYFIELD

James Crain Sr., 79, Iron River – December 7, 2013**Eunice Crain, 76**

James Crain Sr. and his wife, Eunice “Cricket” Crain, were stabbed to death in their home on December 7, 2013. Police responded to a call for help from Eunice, who stated that she and her husband were being beaten by their son. When police arrived at the residence, they found the couple deceased. Their son, 44-year-old James Crain Jr., was also found inside the residence with numerous self-inflicted wounds. Authorities believed he was responsible for their deaths and arrested him, and he was subsequently charged with two counts of first-degree intentional homicide. According to online court records, James Crain Jr. has a history of violent behavior towards family members and had been subject to numerous restraining orders dating back to 2003. He has been charged with two counts of first-degree intentional homicide in the deaths of his parents.

BROWN

Ouida Wright, 45, Green Bay – May 3, 2013

Michael Whitmire, 51, fatally slit the throat of his girlfriend, Ouida Wright. The couple had been dating for nine months. The day of the homicide, they were arguing and breaking up. Whitmire stated that Wright told him they were not going to be together anymore, and when she told him she was going to be seeing other guys, he became upset, got a knife and slit her throat. Whitmire then laid down by Wright and tried to kill himself but was unsuccessful. According to online court records, Whitmire has a history of domestic violence. For Wright’s death, Whitmire was charged with first-degree intentional homicide, to which he pleaded guilty. Whitmire is serving a life sentence in prison, with extended supervision eligibility after 30 years.

BROWN

David Rosenberg, 46, Howard – August 17, 2013

David Rosenberg was fatally shot by his girlfriend, Tricia Phillips, 43. At the time of the incident the couple had been dating for about six months. Phillips told sheriff's deputies that Rosenberg had called her two obscene names and choked her with his left hand in the bedroom of her apartment before she shot him through the head with a 9mm pistol, which she kept by her bedside. Phillips stated that Rosenberg had become upset when she told him that she might be pregnant. However, according to the criminal complaint, Phillips told a neighbor about seven hours before the shooting that she was unhappy that Rosenberg might have been in contact with his ex-wife. Phillips also told the neighbor that she was going to give Rosenberg an ultimatum, and said "something's going down tonight." Police were not able to find any evidence of strangulation to Phillips, and she is charged with second-degree reckless homicide and aggravated battery in the death of Rosenberg.

Darold Vanden Heuvel, 63, Green Bay – December 16, 2013

Green Bay Police responded to a domestic call from Darold Vanden Heuvel's wife, who had filed for divorce a few days earlier. Darold had moved out of the couple's home in November but continued to stalk his wife. She called police on three occasions because he was near her apartment and she believed he intended to harm her. On the morning of December 16, officers responded once again to the residence and found Darold in the parking garage. Darold refused to engage with the officers and ignored their commands. As Darold began unzipping his jacket, officers saw he had a large handgun in his waistband. Darold then began to draw the gun, which led officers to respond with deadly force.

COLUMBIA

Traci Rataczak, 43, Wycena – April 6, 2013

Patrick Kraemer, 46, killed his girlfriend, Traci Rataczak, on April 6, 2013. After a 17-month investigation into the circumstances around Rataczak's death, Kraemer was arrested and charged with first-degree intentional homicide in September 2014. Initially, Kraemer had claimed Rataczak's death was a suicide; however, a heart monitor that Rataczak was wearing pinpointed that she actually died two days prior to Kraemer reporting her death as a suicide. Rataczak spoke with friends about leaving her relationship with Kraemer prior to her death. Her friends also report a history of violence in Rataczak's relationship with Kraemer.

DANE

Jennifer Boyce, 31, Madison – January 23, 2013

Bernard Grosso, 34, killed his estranged wife, Jennifer, with an edged weapon. Boyce's body was found by police in her apartment the next morning. That same day, when Grosso failed to show up for work and was unresponsive to messages from co-workers, police tracked his cell phone to his home and discovered that he had fatally shot himself. They were due in court later the same week to finalize their divorce. Following the incident, Boyce's co-worker told police that Boyce would receive hundreds of text messages and emails per day from Grosso while at work and that Boyce described Grosso as unstable and controlling.

Charles Carll, 59, Madison – August 17, 2013

Police responded to a domestic dispute in progress, after dispatch had received a report that Charles Carll cut his wife in the stomach with a knife. Officers were told that the husband was outside, suicidal and armed with a knife. As officers approached Carll, he ignored their commands to drop the knife and began moving towards the officers. Officers responded with deadly force. They later discovered the man's wife was not injured.

Julie Herskind, 52, Bristol – September 17, 2013

Kevin Herskind, 53, shot and killed his wife, Julie, and their dog, before killing himself. The couple had worked together at a bakery. A co-worker who worked closely with Julie became concerned when she did not show up for her shift, prompting a call to authorities. The co-worker reports that Kevin had exhibited jealous and controlling behavior on multiple occasions, including hiding behind machinery at work, spying on Julie and, on one occasion, hitting Julie in the face after a friend told Julie she looked nice and gave her a hug at a party. The couple had been married for two years.

Elizabeth Singler, 64, Oregon – November 21, 2013

Henry Pullet Jr., 68, fatally shot his girlfriend, Elizabeth Singler, at his former attorney's office, following a long, heated conversation. He then shot and killed himself. Pullet and Singler had shown up unexpectedly at a law office. An attorney at the office had represented Pullet in his divorce proceedings three years prior. Pullet was ostensibly seeking legal advice for an incident that happened earlier in November, in which he allegedly fired a handgun at Singler while saying he was going to kill himself. The attorney described Pullet as "emotionally unstable," adding that he suffered from depression and anxiety and hadn't been taking his medication. After about an hour of tense conversation, another attorney advised Singler to lock herself in the bathroom. After Pullet's attempts to break down the door failed, he pulled a gun out of his coat and shot the lock on the door. Once the door opened, he shot Singler multiple times before walking to the top of the stairwell and shooting himself in the head.

DOUGLAS

Andrew Closson, 21, Gordon – January 1, 2013

According to a neighbor, Andrew Closson was distraught in recent months over losing a girlfriend and was drinking on New Year's Eve at his father's house. At some point, Closson demanded that he be allowed to take a car and drive to his ex-girlfriend's house, but his family refused. Closson then retrieved a .30-30 caliber deer hunting rifle and fired a couple of shots in his father's home and garage. He left the home just as officers were arriving on the scene and began walking along a highway when a deputy spotted him. Closson raised the rifle and pointed it at the deputy, prompting the deputy to respond with deadly force.

Terrence Luukkonen, 46, Superior – May 23, 2013

Terrence Luukkonen was killed by his fiancé's ex-boyfriend, Juan Leonardo Padilla, 41. Luukkonen was sitting in his car in the parking lot of his place of employment when the incident occurred. Luukkonen was engaged to a Twin Ports area woman who recently broke off a relationship with Padilla. The woman told police Padilla was upset about the breakup and made statements to her that he wanted to kill her fiancé. Padilla pleaded guilty to first-degree intentional homicide charges in the death of Luukkonen and has yet to be sentenced.

EAU CLAIRE

Panhia Vue, 35, Altoona – June 10, 2013

Ying Xiong, 41, fatally strangled his wife, Panhia Vue, and then partially burned her body in a shed located on their property. The following day, officers were called to the residence and found Vue's body. Witnesses report that, on the evening of June 9th, the couple could be heard talking in a bedroom at the residence and that Xiong appeared to be under the influence of alcohol. Investigators searched the bedroom where Vue and Xiong were heard talking and found evidence that was consistent with a struggle. According to the criminal complaint, the couple had domestic problems in the past. The owner of the home where Xiong and Vue lived reports that at one point Vue had kicked Xiong out of the house. Xiong was charged with second-degree reckless homicide and mutilating a corpse. He pleaded guilty to both charges. Xiong will spend 22 years in prison and 15 years on extended supervision.

FOND DU LAC

Timothy Nance, 37, Fond du Lac – November 1, 2013

Timothy Nance was shot and killed by his wife, Eve Nance, 37. Afterwards, Eve drove Timothy's body to Milwaukee, dumped it in a wooded area and disposed of the evidence. Eve reported Timothy missing on November 5th. On November 27th, Eve told investigators that she was involved in a physical altercation with her husband on November 1st, during which a gun had been fired, resulting in Timothy's death. Timothy Nance recently told Eve he wanted a divorce. According to court records, there were several occasions where Timothy was charged with disorderly conduct and ordered to have no contact with Eve. She had also obtained a harassment restraining order against Timothy in 2007, which she later requested the courts dismiss. Eve Nance is being charged with first-degree intentional homicide and hiding a corpse.

GREEN LAKE

Eric Gonzalez, 21, Berlin – September 1, 2013

Tiffany Rodriguez, 22, killed her boyfriend Eric Gonzalez by running him down with her vehicle. The incident started when Rodriguez confronted Gonzalez at an apartment complex in Berlin, accusing him of taking money from her. The argument continued with friends becoming involved. A friend of Rodriguez began chasing Gonzalez, and Rodriguez followed in her car. Rodriguez's car then struck Gonzalez as he was crossing an intersection. According to the complaint, Gonzalez had said earlier that day that he was "done with her" and that Rodriguez had been following him around. Rodriguez is charged with first-degree reckless homicide in the death of Gonzalez. The case has not concluded.

JACKSON

Angela Nelson, 34, Black River Falls – June 9, 2013

Angela Nelson was shot and killed by her boyfriend, Michael Harmon, 36. According to the criminal complaint, a friend of the couple was with them the night before and witnessed Harmon with a gun. The friend left the residence and later received a call from Nelson. Nelson asked the friend to return to pick her up because Harmon had thrown her through a window. Before the friend could return, Harmon called to say that Nelson had already left the residence so there was no need to return. The next morning, the friend called police to do a welfare check on Nelson because she hadn't heard from her. When police responded, they found Nelson deceased in the bathtub. Harmon told authorities that Nelson kicked, bit and threw bottles at him, before a struggle ensued over the firearm. Harmon alleges that the gun went off accidentally during the struggle; however, the autopsy results contradicted him because Nelson was not shot at close range. According to online court records, Harmon has a history of violence, including one incident where he stabbed a previous girlfriend and served time in prison. Harmon has been charged with first-degree intentional homicide in Nelson's death. The case has not concluded.

Brian Helgeson, 59, Hixton – September 16, 2013

Lars Helgeson, 20, fatally shot Brian Helgeson, his father, four times with a .22-caliber rifle before dousing the body in gasoline and burning it, then burying Brian's body on the property where they both lived. Lars confessed to authorities on September 25, 2013, and told them where Brian's remains were located. Lars Helgeson was charged with first-degree intentional homicide and hiding a corpse, to which he has pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect.

JUNEAU

Gail Howland, 29, Mauston – May 31, 2013

Cody Treul, 29, fatally shot his ex-girlfriend, Gail Howland, behind a bar in Mauston. Treul also shot Howland's best friend, who survived but is now unable to walk as a result. According to the best friend, Treul approached the two women at a bar and wouldn't leave Howland alone, which eventually led to Treul getting kicked out of the bar. Later, the two women went to a different bar where they came upon Treul again. Immediately, Treul began firing a gun, hitting Howland's friend with two shots and killing Howland with three. Since the shooting, Howland's best friend learned that Howland and Treul had an intimate relationship that ended the evening of the murder. Treul was charged with two counts of first-degree intentional homicide, and has been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of release.

KENOSHA

Erin Ziemendorf, 30, Kenosha – October 26, 2013

Erin Ziemendorf was killed by her boyfriend, Matthew McDowell, 40, on October 26, 2013. McDowell told officials that he and Ziemendorf were in a verbal argument over their relationship and money when it became physical. McDowell claimed that Ziemendorf picked up a corkscrew and swung it at him and then pushed him down on the bed and placed her thumbs in his eyes. According to the complaint, McDowell told officials that after Ziemendorf's hands left his face he heard a crack and noticed that Ziemendorf was choking. McDowell told officials he became nervous and wondered if he had broken Ziemendorf's neck. After he realized Ziemendorf was dead, he panicked and put Ziemendorf's body in her car, and then drove to a Chicago bus station, where McDowell left the car with her body inside the trunk. The next day, McDowell asked his brother to accompany him to the Kenosha Police Department to report Ziemendorf's death as accidental. Chicago authorities were able to locate the vehicle and an autopsy was conducted, which concluded that Ziemendorf's manner of death was homicide. McDowell was charged with first-degree reckless homicide and hiding a corpse. He pleaded guilty to both charges and is serving a 32-year prison sentence.

Heather Adamski, 33, Kenosha – December 3, 2013

On the evening of December 3, 2013, Chester Mass, 38, repeatedly called and texted his girlfriend, Heather Adamski, saying that he had another woman in the home. Mass told Adamski that they were going to get rid of Adamski's property if she did not return immediately. According to the criminal complaint, on the morning of December 4th, Mass woke his brother and told him he shot Adamski. Mass then asked his brother to help him get rid of her body. Adamski's daughter and a friend both told law enforcement that Adamski and Mass had a "rocky relationship." They also claim Mass made death threats toward Adamski. Mass is charged with first-degree intentional homicide, to which he has pleaded not guilty. Mass admits to shooting Adamski, but he claims it was an accident. Mass told authorities he and Adamski had sex and were playing with a gun when he accidentally shot her in the head.

LA CROSSE

Dana Shefelbine, 18, Campbell – August 13, 2013

Dana Shefelbine was beaten and stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend, Jesse Klukas, 22, after she ended their two-year relationship. After killing Shefelbine, Klukas posted two graphic pictures on his Facebook page and told followers in a vulgar posting how he “loved her with everything in [his] being.” After, he fatally shot himself. A longtime friend of Shefelbine stated that the couple’s relationship had turned turbulent and that Shefelbine wanted to leave Klukas but she loved him too much to go. Another tenant in the apartment complex where the couple lived said Shefelbine stated that Klukas had threatened to kill her and her family and that Klukas was acting depressed and recently quit his job.

LINCOLN

Anita Bucki, 48, Corning – April 25, 2013

Anita Bucki was strangled and stabbed to death by her husband, Mark Bucki, 49. On April 26, 2013, Mark Bucki reported his wife missing. He told police that he woke up at 5:00 a.m. and that she was gone, leaving behind her purse and other belongings. Less than a month later, he was arrested after Anita’s body was found about 20 miles from the couple’s home. Mark told investigators that on the evening of April 25th he and Anita had a lengthy discussion about divorce. He admitted that he raised his voice that night, saying he had a temper and that Anita was scared of him. However, Mark maintained his innocence in Anita’s death throughout the investigation and court proceedings. Mark was charged with first-degree intentional homicide, strangulation and suffocation and hiding a corpse. He was found guilty of all charges at a jury trial. A judge sentenced Bucki to 35 years in prison on the homicide charge; two years in prison and two years of extended supervision on the charge of hiding a corpse; and one year in prison with two years of extended supervision on the strangulation and suffocation charge.

MARINETTE

Patricia Waschbisch, 45, Peshtigo – April 28, 2013

Patricia “Trish” Waschbisch was stabbed to death by her boyfriend, Brent Kaempf, 48. The evening before, Waschbisch disclosed to friends that she was leaving Brent and that he had been stalking her the night before while she was out with friends. In 2010, Kaempf was charged with misdemeanor battery and disorderly conduct after allegedly hitting Waschbisch in the face. The case was dismissed by prosecutors as part of a deferred prosecution agreement. For Trish’s death, Kaempf was charged with first-degree intentional homicide, to which he pleaded no contest. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of release.

MILWAUKEE

Anita Brooks, 27, Milwaukee – January 27, 2013

Milwaukee poet Anita Brooks died of a gunshot wound at the apartment she shared with her husband, Keith J. Brooks, 29, and the couple's three-year-old daughter. Brooks told police he and his wife had been arguing for the past few days. He stated that as he tried to leave the home his wife grabbed him, and he then slapped her in the face and shoved her to the floor. As he walked away, he heard a click, turned back toward his wife and saw her looking at her .380 caliber handgun. He told police he sprinted back to her but that she shot herself in the side of the head before he could stop her. However, a medical examiner concluded that Anita Brooks did not fire the fatal shot. In January 2014, a jury rejected Keith's claim that his wife committed suicide and instead found him guilty of first-degree reckless homicide and battery. He was sentenced to 40 years in prison plus 20 years of supervised release for Anita's death.

Anthony Martin, 35, Milwaukee – February 4, 2013

Anthony Martin, 35, was shot and killed by his girlfriend, Irena Moore, 32, on February 4, 2013. The criminal complaint indicates that Moore told officials she and Martin were arguing that day, and the argument turned physical. Moore claims that when the argument escalated she opened Martin's drawers and began throwing his clothes out the window, telling him to leave. Moore stated that Martin threw a candle at her before she grabbed a gun and pointed it at him. Moore told police Martin then threatened to kill her and began moving towards her. According to Moore, that's when she fired the gun at Martin, saying she was trying to scare him. Moore was charged with second-degree reckless homicide, to which she pleaded guilty. She was sentenced to seven years in prison and five years of extended supervision.

Daniel Perez, 39, Milwaukee – March 10, 2013

Luis Perez-Guillermo, 49, shot and killed Daniel Perez, who was a friend of Perez-Guillermo's wife. The criminal complaint states that Perez-Guillermo admitted to police that he attempted to shoot his wife and that he killed Perez. Prior to the incident, Perez-Guillermo heard his wife talking to Perez on the phone. He grabbed the phone from her and told Perez to come pick up "his garbage," referring to Perez-Guillermo's wife. Perez-Guillermo believed that Perez was his wife's boyfriend and shot him when he arrived at their residence. Perez-Guillermo was charged with second-degree intentional homicide and first-degree reckless endangering safety. He pleaded guilty to both charges.

MILWAUKEE

Carlos Diaz-Ruiz, 58, Milwaukee – April 6, 2013

Carlos Diaz-Ruiz was stabbed to death by his stepson, Luis Pacheco, 18. According to a criminal complaint, Pacheco's mother received a call from her son asking if he could stay the night at the residence she shared with Diaz-Ruiz. The woman said yes, and Pacheco came over and went upstairs. Pacheco was upstairs for a short amount of time before he reportedly came downstairs and said he had to go. The complaint says the woman then went upstairs to Diaz-Ruiz's bedroom, turned on the light, and noticed he was bleeding from the neck. When arrested, Pacheco told officials that Diaz-Ruiz had confronted him about being inside the house and hit him in the face, at which point Pacheco reached for a knife that was near the bed and stabbed him. Pacheco's mother told officials that the two did not get along and had been in a number of arguments in the past. Pacheco has pleaded guilty to first-degree intentional homicide and faces up to 40 years in prison.

Annemarie Bautch, 39, Milwaukee – April 8, 2013

Daniel Billings, 41, shot and killed his ex-girlfriend, Annemarie Bautch, as she was in her vehicle backing out of the driveway to go to work. He then turned the gun on himself. Bautch's brother reports there was a history of violence directed at Annemarie, including an incident where Billings beat her so badly that she suffered a broken cheek, two black eyes and a nose injury, requiring her to spend a few days in the hospital. A co-worker and friend of Bautch said they had talked with Bautch about the abuse and that Bautch said she wanted out of the relationship. According to online court records, Billings had a violent criminal history and was a convicted felon, thereby prohibited from possessing a firearm.

Antonio Duran Jr., 29, Milwaukee – June 8, 2013

Diana Garcia, 29, shot and killed her boyfriend, Antonio Duran Jr., during an argument. According to online court records, there was a history of domestic violence in their relationship, perpetrated by Duran and directed at Garcia. In 2007, Garcia was granted a four-year domestic abuse restraining order against Duran. For Duran's death, Garcia was charged with second-degree reckless homicide, to which she pleaded guilty. The case is currently in the appeal process.

Ja'kyla King, 6, Milwaukee – June 23, 2013

Jeramie King, 28, shot and killed his six-year-old daughter, Ja'kyla King, before committing suicide. Police say King and Ja'kyla's mother got into a physical confrontation the morning of the incident before Ja'kyla's mother went to work. On her way home, Ja'kyla's mother stopped at a police station to report domestic violence. When police went to the home to investigate, they found both Jeramie and Ja'kyla had suffered bullet wounds and were dead. According to court records, King's only criminal history of note was a misdemeanor charge for carrying a concealed weapon in 2008.

MILWAUKEE

Debbie Tsyzko, 59, Milwaukee – August 19, 2013

Allen Silva, 56, shot and killed his girlfriend, Debbie Tsyzko, at the assisted living facility where she resided. Then, Silva took his own life with a knife. Some have speculated that the couple had a suicide pact; however, the Milwaukee Police Department has stated there is nothing to indicate that was the case. Tsyzko was employed at the facility before she suffered a stroke and moved in as a resident about four months prior to the incident. A co-owner of the facility said that, as a result of the stroke, Tsyzko relied on a wheelchair and had trouble communicating.

Clarence Charles, 57, Shorewood – July 15, 2013

Clarence Charles was strangled and stabbed to death by his boyfriend, Homer Washington. According to the criminal complaint, a friend was over at Charles' apartment that afternoon. When the friend left, Charles accused Washington of having an affair with the friend, and they began to argue. Later, Charles, armed with a knife, punched Washington in the head. A struggle ensued over the knife, and Charles allegedly stabbed himself in the neck before Washington got hold of the knife and began stabbing and strangling Charles. The next day, police found Charles' body at the apartment after responding to a missing person's report filed by Charles' family. Washington was charged with first-degree reckless homicide, to which he pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 36 years in prison and 14 years extended supervision.

Question Blackmer, 28, Milwaukee – August 20, 2013

Kewanna Morris, 30, fatally stabbed her boyfriend, Question Blackmer. The Milwaukee County District Attorney's office declined to issue charges against Morris, deeming the incident an act of self-defense. There had been numerous calls for help to the couple's address in the year preceding the homicide, two of which resulted in the arrest of Blackmer. According to online court records, Blackmer had a lengthy, violent criminal history.

Fitzroy Willie, 27, Milwaukee – September 7, 2013

Leanna Millen, 43, stabbed Fitzroy Willie to death. Millen and Willie had been in a sexual relationship for a short time. Millen indicated to a family member and friend that, earlier that day, Willie came to her apartment after she had tried to end their relationship and attempted to rape her. The two eventually left her residence and went to a bar, where Willie continued to make advances at Millen. According to the criminal complaint, Millen then left the bar, went back to her residence and grabbed a knife. As Willie followed, pedaling towards her on a bicycle, Millen stabbed him. Millen was charged with second-degree reckless homicide in Willie's death, to which she pleaded guilty. Millen was sentenced to seven years in prison.

MILWAUKEE

Janie Jefferson, 26, Milwaukee – December 19, 2013

Dontavion Smith, 26, shot and killed his girlfriend, Janie Jefferson with an AK-47 assault rifle before turning the gun on himself in front of the couple's three small children. Police indicated that prior to the incident the couple had been arguing about moving back to Arizona. After the shooting, the couple's oldest daughter took her two younger siblings outside of the home and sat on the porch until someone came to see what had happened. According to Wisconsin online court records, Dontavion Smith did not have a criminal history of domestic violence. Neighbors report that they had not seen or heard any violence between the couple in the past.

Cornell Williams, 30, Milwaukee – December 26, 2013

Cornell Williams was stabbed to death by his girlfriend, Krista Batchelor, 24. Batchelor told police that she and the victim were arguing and that they both had knives in their hands. At one point, Williams was in the bathroom and had Batchelor's cell phone and keys. Batchelor was forcing her way into the bathroom to retrieve her property when a struggle ensued. Batchelor began stabbing at Williams and later admitted to police that she had stabbed him one time in the chest. Initially, Batchelor was facing a second-degree reckless homicide charge, but it was later amended to a felony aggravated battery charge, to which she pleaded no contest. According to online court records, Williams was charged in early November 2013 with battery and disorderly conduct, and there was a warrant out for his arrest at the time of his death.

PRICE

Dawn Rambo, 37, Park Falls – August 22, 2013

William Rambo, 46, slit the throat of his wife, Dawn. William told investigators he went to the home he had shared with his wife to work out a deal about his current living situation because Dawn had kicked him out of the house. The criminal complaint states that William took a knife from the kitchen and grabbed Dawn around the neck saying, "What kind of deal do we have now?" and a struggle ensued. William told authorities that he was slashing and stabbing but was not aware he cut her. Dawn was able to flee to a nearby house, where the neighbor called 911. When officers arrived, Dawn was sitting in a neighbor's kitchen with serious injuries. Police rushed her to the hospital, and she died shortly thereafter. William Rambo is charged with first-degree intentional homicide. The case has not concluded.

RACINE

Lucinda White, 44, Racine – January 16, 2013

Ryan King, 47, fatally shot his girlfriend Lucinda White. The criminal complaint in the case indicates that earlier in the evening White called her sister, stated that she and her boyfriend were arguing, and asked her sister to come pick her up from her residence. When the sister arrived, White did not appear. She then called 911 for a welfare check for White. When officers arrived, they found Lucinda White lying in a nearby street. A witness stated that she observed King and White arguing in the street before King put a gun to White's head and shot her. King is a convicted felon, and therefore he was prohibited from possessing a firearm at the time of the homicide. In Lucinda's death, King has been charged with first-degree intentional homicide, felony possession of a firearm, and stalking. The case has not concluded.

Pleasant Prairie – July 23, 2013

The lone fatality in this case was the death of the perpetrator by suicide. Dean Knudtson, 42, shot the man his ex-wife was dating three times in the chest and stomach. Knudtson then called 911 and told authorities what he had done and where he was. As law enforcement arrived on the scene, Knudtson fatally shot himself in the head. The victim sustained serious injuries from the incident but survived. According to online court records, Knudtson and his ex-wife had been divorced for ten years. In 2007, Knudtson faced a misdemeanor damage to property charge and was ordered to have no contact with the man he would shoot in 2013. The day of the incident, Knudtson posted cryptic and threatening statements about death on his Facebook page.

VILAS

Sandra Thruman, 75, Presque Isle – November 23, 2013

Richard Thruman Sr. killed his wife Sandra by hitting her in the head with a hammer. He then committed suicide by shooting himself in the chest with a shotgun. Prior to the incident, Richard called his grandson and asked him to send help because he would be deceased. Responding officers found a note near Richard's body, presumably written by him, which indicated that he and his wife were having issues and that he had no other way out. The grandson who contacted authorities also alluded to marital problems between the couple.

WASHINGTON

Jessie Blodgett, 19, Hartford – July 15, 2013

Daniel Bartelt, 19, fatally strangled his former girlfriend, Jessie Blodgett. The two had dated in high school, and they had recently been spending time together creating music. Friends of Blodgett reported that Bartelt recently expressed a renewed romantic interest in her but that the feelings were not mutual. According to the criminal complaint, Blodgett's mother found her deceased in her bed. Bartelt told officials he learned of Blodgett's death from a friend and had even attended a vigil for Blodgett at her parents' house the day after her death. Bartelt is charged with first-degree intentional homicide.

WAUKESHA

Shanel Negrón, 24, Waukesha – April 22, 2013

Eddie Callaway fatally shot his girlfriend, Shanel Negrón. A crossing guard who was working near Negrón's home said that earlier that day Negrón had approached her, asking her to call the police if she saw a man at her door. The crossing guard indicated that Negrón sounded frightened and concerned. After shooting Negrón, Callaway fled to Indiana, where he was apprehended on April 30th. As back-up officers arrived on the scene to assist with the arrest, Callaway pulled a gun out of his waistband and fatally shot himself in the head. According to court records, Callaway had several previous run-ins with the law, including battery and disorderly conduct charges in Wisconsin and felony domestic violence charges in Indiana.

WINNEBAGO

Wilson Lutz, 66, Menasha – April 19, 2013

Town of Menasha Police officers responded to a domestic call from a woman who had just broken up with Wilson Lutz. She said she didn't want any further contact with Lutz, but that he was at her home and was pounding on the door. When police arrived, Lutz was very emotional and told officers he could not live without the woman. Lutz reportedly spent much of the day drinking, returned to his apartment and called 911 for himself, telling the dispatcher that he couldn't "live on the face of the earth" without his girlfriend. When an officer arrived, he spotted Lutz at the end of a dark hallway with a shotgun pointed towards the officer. Lutz refused the officer's commands to drop the weapon, prompting the officer to use deadly force.

Homicide Prevention

Our understanding of the factors that put victims of domestic violence at risk to be killed continues to grow. As a result, domestic violence homicides are becoming more predictable, and the potential to prevent these tragedies continues to increase. In the last several years, a number of advocates, law enforcement officers and other partners have initiated promising practices that utilize our knowledge of homicide risk factors to create enhanced safety for those victims who are most likely to be killed. Starting in 2012, End Abuse sought to engage Coordinated Community Response (CCR) teams in a strategic effort to utilize the insights from our homicide reports as a catalyst for improving practices on a local level. CCR teams are multidisciplinary work groups that bring key players in various community systems together to improve their response to domestic violence victims and to hold perpetrators accountable. For the past 18 months, the Jefferson and Outagamie county CCR teams have been looking for opportunities to mitigate lethality risk based on larger scale studies of homicide risk factors, our homicide report findings, and the themes and trends they have observed locally. We asked members of the teams to reflect on what being involved in the homicide prevention project has meant to them:

“I am committed, on behalf of the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, to continue to help prevent homicides. When a homicide occurs, it tears through a community and has long lasting emotional and fiscal effects.”

-Don Hunter, Detective Sergeant,
Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department

“I like that this got us exploring the methods we were already using but making them better and making sure everyone was on the same page.”

“I think our greatest accomplishment has been the partnership between all of the different agencies involved.”

-Mike Bartlein, Corporal,
Grand Chute Police Department

“Greater efforts to increase victim safety and hold perpetrators accountable are taking place during the initial contact by law enforcement. Victims are better informed as to the type of resources they have available.”

In addition to Jefferson and Outagamie counties, many other communities in Wisconsin are taking steps to address potentially lethal domestic violence. One such effort that is unfolding in Wisconsin is the Lethality Assessment Program. The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) created the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) based on research by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell of Johns Hopkins University. The LAP is a risk assessment and referral protocol used with domestic violence victims, and is founded on three critical facts. First, only four percent of domestic violence homicide victims from Dr. Campbell’s study had ever used domestic violence victim services. Second, in contrast, in 50% of domestic violence homicides, law enforcement officers previously had contact with the victims or perpetrators. Third, when victims go to shelter, their risk of homicide decreases by 60%.¹ The LAP involves training officers, healthcare providers and advocates to ask victims a set of 11 questions based on the most predictive risk factors for homicide. Victims who are identified as high risk are immediately connected with an advocate and encouraged to seek help. The LAP is considered an emerging best practice and is being utilized in jurisdictions in more than 30 states.

1 Campbell, Jacquelyn C., et al. “Assessing risk factors for intimate partner homicide.” National Institute of Justice Journal 250 (2003): 14-19.

The research that forms the basis for the Maryland Initiative shows that the key to preventing domestic violence homicides is identifying victims who are most at risk, overcoming the isolation that surrounds these victims and connecting them with services. However, in every corner of our state, there are many victims in grave danger who have not yet been able to connect with lifesaving services and support. Therefore, every community should strive to implement strategies and practices that are informed by the known risk and protective factors for victims. Achieving this goal will require ensuring that victim service providers in every region of the state have the capacity to receive high-risk referrals and that law enforcement officers, health care providers and other professionals who have contact with victims are trained on assessing risk and making effective and timely referrals.

The first community in Wisconsin to begin implementation of the LAP is Milwaukee County. By March 2015, all of the law enforcement jurisdictions in Milwaukee County will be using the LAP when responding to domestic calls. We asked representatives from Milwaukee County to comment on the state of affairs with regard to their response to domestic violence victims and offenders. Tom Poellot, Cudahy Police Chief and member of the Milwaukee County Law Enforcement Executive's Association, and Peter Tempelis, head of the Domestic Violence Unit at the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office provided the following input.

Q: *How has your community worked to identify and respond to lethality risk in domestic violence cases?*

A: Milwaukee County has a proactive, multi-faceted strategy to identify and respond to lethality risk in domestic violence cases. We believe our long-standing partnerships and collaboration between law enforcement, domestic violence advocates and prosecutors have allowed us to develop and implement new and innovative best practices. Ultimately, our goal is to provide greater justice and protection for victims and their children and to transform and save the lives of those suffering the ills of domestic violence.

Tom and Peter point to eight specific strategies that they see as essential to preventing homicides in Milwaukee County.

Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

Milwaukee County successfully pursued a federal grant for adoption and implementation of the Maryland Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) to identify relationships with high risk for lethality and provide proactive intervention services aimed at preventing homicide. The LAP will work to connect high risk victims to lifesaving advocacy services from the moment they choose to reach out to law enforcement for help.

District Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Protection Program

This unit is comprised of investigators and analysts who investigate intimidation and witness tampering following the incident. Such conduct is most prevalent in high risk matters in which the offender exerts significant power and control over the victim. The offender's aim is to avoid accountability and, without investigation and response, the result often includes continued violence. The program was highlighted at a national conference on lethality as a best practice and "the future of domestic violence enforcement."

Co-located Victim Advocates at Law Enforcement Agencies and the DA's Office

Many law enforcement agencies, particularly those with the highest number of homicide incidents, have co-located victim advocacy services provided by Sojourner Family Peace Center (SFPC). SFPC also is co-located at the District Attorney's office. Co-location allows for immediate service to victims and their children after domestic abuse incidents. SFPC provides advocates who travel to law enforcement agencies that do not yet have co-location. These services also are available within the community before violence erupts.

Establishment of a Family Justice Center

Breaking ground in late 2014, the Family Justice Center aims to provide holistic services to victims in one location. Services will include a shelter, co-located law enforcement and prosecutors, school representatives, as well as medical, social services, counseling and legal resources, all under one roof and within blocks of the courthouse.

District Attorney's Office Child Protection & Advocacy Unit (CPAU)

This unit employs specialized prosecutors who work in concert with law enforcement, social services and Domestic Violence Unit prosecutors. CPAU prosecutors handle matters involving both domestic violence and child abuse, which require unique investigation and services. The benefits of the partnership include not only enhanced, specialized service, but also detection of the signs of child abuse.

Chronic and High-Risk Offender Program

This program aims to identify relationships where there is a high risk for lethality so that investigation of incidents is coordinated by both law enforcement and the prosecutor's office. This program laid the foundation for discussion between the District Attorney's office and the Milwaukee County Law Enforcement Executives Association (MCLEEA) regarding moving forward with the LAP, because the LAP provided an evidence-based method for identifying high risk cases.

Focus on Effective Investigation of Stalking Crimes

Our partnership between law enforcement, advocates, prosecutors and victim/witness protection investigators helped us further develop our interdisciplinary approach to effective investigation of stalking, which focuses on an offender's pattern of conduct rather than singular incidents of abuse.

Successfully Prosecuting Offenses Without Testimony in Court by the Victim

In recognition of the difficulty in prosecuting domestic violence cases, the District Attorney's office and the Wisconsin Attorney General's office partnered in successfully briefing, litigating and prosecuting offenses without testimony in court by an alleged victim.

Contributions

Mariana Rodriguez is the Program Manager of the Latina Resource Center, which is a project of UMOS in Milwaukee. The Latina Resource Center provides services to Latina victims of domestic violence and their families. We asked her to discuss the barriers that Latina victims face when seeking safety.

Q: *Studies show that domestic violence occurs in the Latin@¹ community at roughly the same rates as the larger population. However, achieving safety for Latin@ victims can be more complicated. Thirty-nine percent of foreign-born Latina callers to the National Domestic Violence Hotline said they were “afraid of calling the police or going to court for help as a result of the general immigration situation.” Nationally, less than three in ten Latina women reported knowing about domestic abuse restraining orders. These facts are especially concerning in relation to domestic violence homicides because victims’ isolation from services and resources is linked with increased risk of lethality. What unique difficulties do Latin@ victims in Wisconsin encounter?*

A: There are a number of barriers. One of the largest is a lack of financial freedom for survivors, to be able to have the financial resources or support to be able to have their own apartment and have their own transportation. Transportation is often critical for women who have children who need to be driven to school or to appointments. A lot of Latina survivors depend on their partners to drive.

The transportation issue is, of course, tied to another set of significant barriers, which are barriers related to immigration. Undocumented individuals cannot obtain drivers’ licenses, which poses an entire range of challenges. Victims also have a lot of concerns about immigration status. They don’t know whether going to court to get a restraining order is connected to immigration enforcement or ICE. They are many times even afraid to seek medical care for themselves or their children because they think the hospital or doctor’s office might be connected to ICE. And even though there are forms of immigration

relief for domestic violence victims, like U-visas, often victims have concerns about all of the potential consequences of requesting that kind of help. They are really fearful and reluctant, but many, thankfully, take the risk.

Likewise, victims are afraid to contact the police. They are afraid of the immigration consequences for themselves, and many times for their perpetrators. They want the violence to stop, but they don’t necessarily want the perpetrator to be caught up in immigration enforcement.

We also have a real lack of mental health and counseling services for the families we serve. Many of these barriers are tied to poverty.

On a local level, we have worked with families to overcome these challenges. We have culturally-specific services located in the heart of the Latino community. We have the knowledge and expertise to help victims achieve safety despite the significant barriers placed in front of them.

We have also worked with the local police districts so that police are more sensitive to the kinds of concerns that Latina victims are experiencing when victims interact with law enforcement. The local police officials have been very supportive, and they understand the importance of working to connect victims to services.

Finally, I know we have developed a positive reputation in the community because the most common way victims hear about our services is through word of mouth, through a family member or friend who has used our services and who brings the client here. That’s powerful. It’s a protective factor for victims. The awareness within the community—the awareness that help is available—breaks down the isolation and sense of hopelessness that can keep victims trapped.

*The spelling “Latin@” is meant to denote both the feminine and masculine forms of the word, both “Latina” and “Latino.”

Contributions

Audrey K. Skwierawski is an Assistant Attorney General with the Wisconsin Department of Justice and is the Violence Against Women Resource Prosecutor for the department. In that role, she provides training and assistance to prosecutors across Wisconsin. We asked Audrey to explain how prosecutors can maximize the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions in domestic violence cases.

Q: *Research suggests that criminal justice intervention decreases the risk of domestic violence homicides when the intervention is coordinated and consistent, i.e., is part of the community coordinated response. Such responses involve, “swift adjudication, close supervision of parole outcomes through periodic court reviews or specialized probation programs, ongoing risk management for arrested perpetrators and ongoing safety planning for victims, and close supervision involving sanctions for batterers who drop out of mandated intervention programs.”¹*

What is the role of the prosecutor in promoting an effective community coordinated response to domestic violence? What are the challenges in Wisconsin, and what are our successes?

A: Criminal justice intervention can decrease the risk of domestic violence homicide when the intervention is consistent and coordinated with community partners. Wisconsin prosecutors play a critical role in criminal justice system interventions, supporting victims and prosecuting offenders with the end goal of holding them accountable for their abuse. Each prosecution sends a clear message to the community at large that domestic violence is not a “private family matter” and will not be tolerated.

Even the most dedicated prosecutor cannot hope to succeed without the support of other justice system and community partners. When law enforcement officers conduct thorough investigations, prosecutors charge and win more cases. When medical care professionals treat victims’ injuries and keep documentation, pros-

ecutors have tangible proof for juries. When advocates help victims to understand the criminal and civil justice systems, victims are more likely to participate in the prosecution. When judges hold offenders accountable through their words, actions and sentences it reinforces the message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. And when corrections agents and batterers’ treatment programs work together to provide abusers with the tools they need to change their learned behaviors, recidivism goes down and the whole community is safer.

Prosecutions do not occur in a vacuum; successful outcomes for victims and their families require a coordinated effort with all partner systems and agencies working together to deliver consistent results. Intentional commitment to a coordinated response is therefore a prerequisite for effective domestic violence prosecutions. Prosecutors should commit to participate in local multidisciplinary groups whose goal is improving the whole community response to domestic abuse. Regular participation ensures open lines of communication and the ability to address breakdowns in or between systems that can undermine our shared goal to support victims and to hold offenders accountable. Prosecutors need the support of other justice system and community partners to effectively prosecute domestic violence cases, and regular participation in a multidisciplinary community group is the best way to ensure that this happens.

At the Department of Justice this philosophy is at the very heart of our domestic violence

1 Campbell, Jacquelyn C., Daniel Webster, Jane Koziol-McLain, Carolyn Block, Doris Campbell, Mary Ann Curry, Faye Gary et al. “Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study.” *American journal of public health* 93, no. 7 (2003): 1089-1097.

Contributions

initiatives. Our Office on Crime Victim Services has convened a Violence Against Women Act Advisory Committee with an appointed group of prosecutors, judges, community advocates, coalitions, health care providers, victim service professionals and corrections representatives, who advise and inform our statewide anti-violence work. Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen has created a Violence Against Women Resource Prosecutor position whose job is to provide training and support to prosecutors around the state as they endeavor to vigorously prosecute domestic abusers. The Attorney General has also created a Violence Against Women Resource Law Enforcement Trainer who works to provide statewide training and support to law enforcement officers. The Department of Justice's Training and Standards Division has created a multidisciplinary work group to review and revise the domestic violence training modules for law enforcement recruits.

Each of these initiatives represents a decided commitment to promoting community coordinated response as the foundation for criminal justice interventions. Such coordination comes with challenges, as successful ongoing coordinated efforts require a time commitment and the willingness to continue participation despite having to subject one's own system to sometimes critical examination. Although it can be difficult at times, this very process is what creates the best possible prosecution response, one that is part of a criminal justice system intervention with the power to truly decrease the risk of domestic violence homicide.

Contributions

State Senator Jennifer Shilling represents the 32nd Senate District in western Wisconsin. She is a member of the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse. She also is a surviving family member of a homicide incident that took the lives of her parents. In a conversation, we asked her to reflect on her experiences and the impact they have had on her work as a legislator.

Since 2000, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin has published Domestic Violence Homicide Reports. The reports document every incident of domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin in a given year. By its nature, The reports recount incidents that are extremely violent and inhumane. The reports do not, to any significant degree, tell the stories of how the victims lived and does not capture the loss that is felt by surviving family and friends. They also do not relay how surviving friends and family members continue live their lives in the wake of such painful tragedies.

Q: *You and your family suffered an unfathomable loss when your parents were murdered in 1993. The homicide was not related to domestic abuse in any way, but your experiences going forward from your parents' deaths likely have similarities with the experiences of many of the family members and friends of individuals who are listed in the report as victims. Could you describe the process of grappling with your parents' homicides? How do you honor their memories?*

A: On January 8, 1993, two men entered my parents' restaurant in Palatine, Illinois and murdered my parents and five of their employees. The case was unsolved for nearly 10 years, and when the suspects were arrested in May 2002, we waited years for the two separate trials. My sisters and our families sat through two capital punishment trials in Chicago in 2007 and 2009. Both suspects were found guilty, sentenced to life in prison and spared the death penalty. Our extended family was very supportive of my sisters and me. We were fortunate to have the coping skills to deal with this, as well as being very close as a family. We relied upon the victim/witness staff to help us prepare for the

trials and to explain the court proceedings to us. At different times, we relied on our faith and turned to professionals to help us cope and understand this tragic event in our lives. My sisters have appeared on different panels to speak out against the death penalty and each year I visit a correctional facility in western Wisconsin and speak to the inmates about my experience with the court system, the trial, the importance of victim impact statements and the use of restorative justice between defendant and victim.

Q: *You are a public servant. As a legislator, through drafting legislation, debating issues and casting votes, you have an impact on a range of laws and policies related to public safety and victims of crime. How does the memory of your parents and the way they died affect your approach to being a legislator?*

A: As elected officials, we all come to the Legislature with life experiences that shape us. My parents' lives cast a very long and positive shadow over my life. I want to emulate the values they instilled in me and remember how they lived, rather than how they died. Because of this tragic loss, I am able to look at legislation and issues through a unique and different lens. I know and understand the pain of a grieving family members who are dealing with senseless violence, the frustration of an overburdened court system, and the will to make something positive come out of a horrible situation.

Q: *You are a member of the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse. In this and other ways, you have shown a passion for working to support domestic violence victims and to increase their safety. Although your parents' murders*

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were not related to domestic violence, does this personal experience play a role in your commitment to protecting victims of domestic violence?

A: Yes. All pain is the same, whether it is gun violence, domestic violence or workplace violence; the act of power and control and senseless violence in our communities cost of all us. I can relate to others who have lost a loved one to domestic violence. And sometimes when I have met with a victim's family or with survivors, words are not necessary. We know the pain. There is comfort and support in that silence, and I pledge to be their voice in the public debate.

Q: *Each year, the report finds that firearms are the most common weapon in domestic violence homicides. In total, guns account for more Wisconsin domestic violence homicides than all other methods of killing combined. As a country, we are currently having a renewed discussion about gun safety laws and, in particular, how criminals' easy access to guns fuels deadly violence. Part of the reason this national discussion is resonating with ordinary Americans – if not with all politicians – is that surviving family members, such as the Sandy Hook parents, have had the courage to come forward and publicly demand change. As a legislator and as a victim of gun violence, how do you view the public policy conversation around gun safety and what do you see as the role of individuals who have been personally affected?*

A: The debate around gun safety is not where it should be. Agencies will put out a report on deaths occurring on our roads or snowmobiling deaths or drunk driving, and lawmakers will pledge to make our roads safer or to promote

safety campaigns to reduce deaths. However, there never seems to be that running total of gun violence deaths in our state that drives the call for action and outrage to make our homes, schools, workplaces and communities safer. When the news reports a school shooting, a campus shooting, a military base shooting, a shooting in a salon or temple, we pause for a moment, express our sympathy and attend community memorial services. However, we must do more than that. Our loved ones deserve a discussion and action that results in securing safety and justice for them and others. It is not easy to talk about these personal tragedies, and for some they may not see themselves as an agent of change, but for those that can speak, share their stories, work to introduce legislation, and lend their voice to this policy debate, it is critical, courageous and can end up being cathartic.

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In 2010, Rosalind Ross, 30, was shot and killed by her girlfriend, Malika Willoughby. Rosalind and Malika had been in an on and off relationship since they were teenagers. Malika killed Rosalind as Rosalind was attempting to leave the relationship and start a new life in Oklahoma, where she previously played college basketball and led the Sooners to a Final Four. Her family participated in the release of 2010 report, which contained the name of their beloved Rosalind.

We asked Pamela and Willie to sit down with us for discussion and reflection now that it has been four years since the death of their daughter. Below is a transcript of parts of the conversation. Pamela and Willie joined Tony Gibart of End Abuse at a Milwaukee-area restaurant. The restaurant has special significance for the Collins family because it was the site of an important conversation between Rosalind and her father about three years before her homicide. After a period of long estrangement between Rosalind and her dad over Rosalind's sexuality, Rosalind and her father met at the restaurant, came to terms and repaired their relationship.

Because Rosalind was well-known in the community and beyond, her homicide attracted media attention. The conversation with Pamela and Willie started with a discussion of how the media attention impacted their initial experiences of the tragedy.

Tony Gibart: *There was quite a lot of media attention surrounding Rosalind's murder. What did you think of the way the media covered the homicide?*

Pamela Collins: I think they did a good job. They told the story. The only thing I didn't like about it was how nonchalantly we were approached. The police never came to our house. I found out from my sister, and I had to go to the police station. The police acted so nonchalant. "We don't know anything about it. You might have to go to (the) Silver Spring (police station)."

TG: *So the media was there before the police ever talked to you?*

PC: Yeah, the media had the story before we ever knew.

Willie Collins: To tell you the truth, there were folks from out of town that knew before we ever knew about it.

PC: My father was in Las Vegas, and he knew about it before we did. It was all over. And here we were in Milwaukee, and we knew nothing. And, I had a feeling because she wasn't answering her phone.

WC: I think the media did a good job. They said a lot of positive things about my daughter. I just didn't appreciate the way they police handled it. They said they couldn't identify her because she didn't have a criminal record. That's kind of a slap in the face that my daughter would need to have a criminal record before they could identify her.

That night, I was making some music with a friend of mine, and his daughter said she had just witnessed a murder. Some girl just killed her guy named "Rob." She was saying "Rob," but she was talking about "Roz." It's a good thing she said "Rob" because I would have gone after Malika.

My daughter was about to go out and do something positive for her life. But, the media did a good job. If there was an event or memorial for Roz, they were there. The *Community Journal* called me and did a nice story about my daughter.

I wasn't too thrilled about my daughter's lifestyle at first. It wasn't until we came here, to this restaurant, and talked. After that, we were alright, and we were close. I told her, "I am alright with your lifestyle. I just don't like the way you live."

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TG: *What did you mean by that?*

PC and WC: Malika.

WC: The girl who killed her. It was a parent's instinct.

TG: *The story that was written about Rosalind in ESPN Magazine starts, "Malika Willoughby loved Rosalind Ross." Obviously, that is the wrong message. You don't kill a person who you love. Did you ever have to hear similar excuses from others?*

PC: Yes, from Malika's friends. They would say, "Malika loved Roz so much." But no, she did not. Malika felt like she could control her. So she thought, if I can buy her this, if I do that, if I do this, she won't leave me. She wanted to control the relationship; she wanted to control Roz. Even if Rosalind came to my house, she would be calling, calling. She would be at work and calling Rosalind.

WC: Once she was on vacation with her family and she was calling Rosalind to ask where she was and where she had been. Malika was so socially controlling that she bought a car that she knew Rosalind would like, and then she had Rosalind drive her to work and pick her up from work. Then, she was around Rosalind all the time.

She would buy Rosalind things and when they got into an argument, she would take it back. I told Rosalind, "Whatever I give your mother, it is hers." Rosalind would be upset about it. I told her, "Things can be replaced; your life can't."

TG: *So you had pretty frank conversations with Rosalind about the possibility of her being killed?*

WC: Yeah.

TG: *What did she say?*

WC and PC: I've got it.

WC: I will be okay. I can handle it. I told her, "Don't let someone take care of you." The majority of people who want to "take care of you" want to own you. They want to use what they did for you as leverage. Be your own person. Do your thing.

Rosalind woke up and said, "I am 30 years old. I am not doing anything with my life." We always told her, "You don't have to be here. There is nothing holding you here."

TG: *Rosalind had a lot of connections in Oklahoma?*

PC and WC: Yeah.

WC: They loved her in Oklahoma. She was a superstar in Oklahoma. Rosalind was a people person. She played basketball unselfishly. She was a team player.

WC: My daughter and I did not get along for a long time. I did not care for her lifestyle.

TG: *When did that become an issue?*

WC: When I found out.

PC: When she was 17, because you put her out.

WC: I put her out when she was 18. I said, "I don't want Malika in my house again."

TG: *What was it that allowed you, when she was 27, to tell her that you were okay with her being a lesbian but that you did not want her to be with Malika?*

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WC: She said, “Daddy, you always told us to always be who we are. That way, we will know who we are and everyone else will know who we are. How can I be that, when you won’t accept it?” I said, “You are right. If that’s who you are, I will accept it.”

PC: When Rosalind and her dad made up, Malika was jealous of that too.

TG: *Do you think Malika wanted Rosalind to be isolated from her father?*

PC: Yes, whenever Rosalind came back from talking with her father, Malika would say she was different. When I talked to Rosalind about Malika, she heard me, but she didn’t hear me. When Willie talked to her, she heard him.

WC: Rosalind started seeing things they way they were.

PC: Rosalind and Willie used to go at it.

WC: Yep. She (Pam) would always say, “You two are too much alike. That’s why you don’t get along.” But after we talked, I told her she was right and that I accept it. I told her I loved her, and the only thing I didn’t love was who she was with. I said, “If that is the way you want to be, cool.” After that, it was totally different. She came around me more. I came around her more. She was around my family more. She came around my mother, her grandmother, more. She would call her and say, “Hi, Grammy.” She would call me to say “hi” and check on me. She was like that—small things. I value that. What pisses me off is that ten years went by with me and her going at it. She always gave me respect.

TG: *Pam, what was that period, when Willie and Rosalind were in conflict, like for you?*

PC: It was very difficult. It was very uncomfortable. I felt like I shouldn’t have had to choose, choose sides. I felt like they should have been able to sit down and talk about situations.

WC: I was a very hard parent. But, me being the way I was, my kids came out okay. They didn’t rob anybody, and they all finished school.

TG: *If one of your friends told you she had a 17-year-old daughter in an abusive relationship with another woman, what would you say to her?*

PC: I would say, “Go, talk to your child. Explain the consequences of domestic violence, and help them to get out of that relationship—immediately.” A person does not have a right to lay hands on you or control you or tell you who to be or who to be with because of love. Because you have to understand, there is true love and there is love and hate. It’s a fine line. Someone can tell you they love you, but they want to control you. They want to know where you are. They want to be in your life and all about your life. It’s not so. If I had a friend, and she came to talk to me about their child being in an abusive relationship, I would tell them, without a doubt, get your child out of that abusive relationship.

Malika told me that if Rosalind ever left her, she was going to kill her. She said, “This time, I am going to kill her.” I said, “Hold up, that’s my child you are talking about.” She tried to pass it off because she was drunk. I said, no, because when you drink, that’s when you have the courage to say what you want to say.

WC: There were warning signs. There were warning signs years before this happened. At the age of 16, Malika caught a bus down to Oklahoma and Rosalind had to take a buck knife away

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from her. At 16 years old, taking a bus to Oklahoma—that’s 24 hours. That’s just to get there... and then to find her too. I said, “That’s a sign.”

PC: What keeps me going, what keeps me positive, is to think about all of the things she has done. She accomplished a lot in her little life. One of Rosalind’s fans, who later became a friend, got raped in college. Rosalind saw her as she was going to the dorm and asked her what was wrong. And she said that she had just been raped and that she wanted to kill herself. Rosalind stayed with her, before class, after practice. She walked her to her classes.

WC: She made sure she wasn’t alone anymore.

PC: If she couldn’t make it, she made sure someone else was there for her. This friend came to the funeral, and she has kept in touch. And, she said she couldn’t understand. But that’s what I tell people, “You can’t understand. You don’t know what is going on someone else’s mind.” People don’t know what is going on behind closed doors. I used to always ask Rosalind what is going on because I am a mother. I love my kids. I am in tune with my kids, and I knew something was going on. She said, “No Mom, I am alright. I have got it.” I said, “Baby, sometimes when you think you’ve got something, you don’t.”

TG: *Why do you think she thought that she “had it?”*

PC: I guess her being butch.

TG: *Do you think she felt she had to be more independent or tough because that was her identity?*

PC: Yes, and her being the oldest. She always tried to set an example for her brothers. And I said, “Girl, you don’t have to.”

WC: I think she finally realized that she could do better and wanted to do better.

Malika’s family took everything from the apartment. All we got from Rosalind was a pack of gum with blood on it and two quarters.

Next month will be four years. I try to stay away from people on the anniversaries. The last day I saw her was September 6, which was a Labor Day. She was murdered on the 15th, and we buried her on the 25th. So that whole month, the beginning and the middle and the end, I have my moments. You know, I shed my tears. I just stay away from people. Because people have a tendency to say the wrong things, trying to say the right things. Saying stuff like, “Hey, you know, I know how you feel. I lost my mom.” I tell them, “I know you love your mom, but how old was she?” They say, “She was 75. She died of cancer.” I say, “Okay then. You had time to prepare yourself for that going, for her death. And you can cry for the hurt that she is gone, but I am crying for the fact that my daughter was taken.” If someone would have told me that I would have to bury one of my kids, I never would have figured it out because my kids they are people people, they don’t try to start any drama.

It is never going to be a good month for me. I take off on the 6th. I am off on the 15th. I am off on the 25th. I don’t want to work on those days. I know how those days are going to be. It could be 20 years down the line. January 9th is my birthday. January 17th is her birthday. I will not work on those days. I miss my daughter calling me on my birthday to say, “Pops, happy birthday.” I miss calling her. It hurts. I will tell anybody. I don’t try to hold back. I still have moments. People say, “What’s wrong, man?” “Missing my daughter.” They leave me alone.

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TG: *So, the anniversaries are especially painful. We last saw each other about three years ago. You both seem to be doing okay.*

WC: Life still goes on.

PC: It was a journey to get here. You have to let go of that anger because that anger turns to bitterness and that bitterness turns hatred. And so with the help of the Lord, I forgave Malika.

WC: I am not doing that.

PC: It is only through Christ, the Lord who strengthens me, who gave me the strength to forgive this girl. It was a hard thing to accept, a hard thing to go through, but, inside of me, I was dying. I knew. I had to learn. I had to accept. It was hard to accept the fact that my eldest child is gone, that I am never going to see her again. And it was hard to accept that I have to keep living, because a part of you feels guilty for still being here. So, it's a journey. You are not equipped to go through it because you don't expect it. You expect your kids to outlive you. But the age that we live in, it is not happening. Around my house, everyday, there is someone getting shot. You can hear the guns—everyday.

TG: *What is it like to live with that level violence in the background while having a very personal experience with violence?*

PC: I don't get it. I don't understand why they can't do something about guns. I understand people have a right to bear arms, but they also have a right to be responsible. You are a gun owner, then okay—there are consequences that come with owning a gun. Just like the baby who went to his mother's car and got the gun and shot himself. How does this happen? This is learned. I am frustrated with the gun laws, how easy it is to get a gun. It is so easy for someone to use a gun.

WC: We have gun laws, but they don't work because a lot of the folks that are doing the shooting are buying the guns off the streets. It's the people. There are no values being taught anymore. How are you going to value your life, when no one is teaching you about the values of life? I told my kids, if you ever want to fit in anywhere, you come home.

TG: *What would you tell people who are more recently grieving the loss of a loved one who has been killed?*

WC: Take it one day at a time.

PC: It is a process.

WC: Don't hide it, your moments. Go through them, because eventually it is going to have to come out. When it first happens, there is no control over it. Later, you can pick your spots. You can contain it a little bit better.

PC: Don't run from it. Don't run from the situation. Don't act like it didn't happen, because it happened, and the more quickly you are able to able to accept it and deal with it, the more quickly you are able to let go of the pain, little by little. It takes time. Be patient. Depend on the Lord and pray. He will get through any situation.

WC: What got me through a lot of it was that I would go and DJ. Matter of fact, the day we buried my daughter, I DJed. It helped me get my life back on track—and keep living. I celebrated that night...because my daughter's funeral was at capacity. Over a thousand people came. People came from all over the country and overseas. In the 30 years my daughter lived, she touched all those people. She made a difference in the time she was here.

Contributions

Kabzuag Vaj is the co-executive director of Freedom, Inc. We met with her in a community garden that Freedom, Inc. and its clients founded on the shores of Monona Bay in Madison. We asked Kabzuag to comment on passages in previous reports related to the connections between Hmong culture, domestic violence, survival and healing.

Q: *The 2011 & 2012 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, in a discussion of domestic violence in Hmong and Lao communities, says that aspects of cultural identity can both be strengths and used as tactics of battering. What aspects of Hmong culture provide strength and opportunities for healing for Hmong victims?*

A: As with any culture, parts of the culture can be used to perpetuate violence and other parts of the culture can be very healing. Gardening, for example, has always been a healing part of culture for Hmong women. For hundreds of years, Hmong women have fed and clothed their families from what we grow. After arriving in the United States as refugees, land for gardens and food was not readily accessible for Hmong families. For many Hmong people, especially Hmong elders, gardening is a way of life and essential to their health and healing. In 2011 after years of domestic violence services, advocacy trainings, and leadership development, together Hmong elder survivors and our staff, successfully organized to create a community garden at a public park in their community.

The community garden allows Hmong survivors to build community and grow their own food, which is an essential part of Hmong culture that is fundamentally healing and life-giving.

Another example, more Hmong advocates and programs in Wisconsin use paj ntaub, traditional embroidery art work, as a tool to engage, build and heal Hmong sisters, elders, and children. The idea is that services to Hmong sisters can be more than just a space to talk, more than a support group. Rather, survivors can connect and draw support through sewing paj ntaub. We go back to parts of our culture

that we know are healing, back to traditions, arts, crafts and skills that Hmong women have always had and done. This is a crucial part of addressing the hurt, pain and trauma in our communities.

When people talk about Hmong history, traditions and culture, it is normally through the lens of men (war, religion, traditional practices—of which women are often excluded and or have limited access to). For so long, our narrative of what it means to be Hmong has been told through that lens. As Hmong mothers and daughters, we are not always given the knowledge of the traditions and rituals, and we are not given equal opportunity to define Hmong culture for the outside world. Yet, we are no less Hmong, and our cultural practices, like gardening, sewing and Hmong paj ntaub, are all equally important parts of the Hmong narrative and history. Hmong women's stories, heroism, and contributions should be included in this history also. It is important to acknowledge and give credit to Hmong Wisconsin women advocates, because their dedication to serving their sisters while building leadership and healthy communities, at all cost is a testament of their courage and wisdom.

Going back to the Report, we have seen a decrease of domestic violence homicides in Hmong communities in Wisconsin, and it is important to acknowledge and give credit to the Hmong women advocates who for the past 15 years, have worked relentlessly to end abuse in their community—one sister at a time. These advocates are part of Hmong culture; they are not separated from it. These Hmong women have created peace in Hmong families, and the strength and solidarity they forged to bring about that change is an accomplishment of Hmong culture.

Contributions

Peg Geegan, former Superintendent of the Marshfield School District and now Building Principal, and Becky Lee, School Psychologist at Marshfield High School, talked with us about their work to address and prevent teen dating violence. Their efforts were partially motivated by a homicide that was included in the 2012 report.

End Abuse: *In the Marshfield School District, you have formed a strong partnership with the Personal Development Center, your local domestic violence victim service provider, and you have taken steps to ensure that students who may be experiencing dating violence are supported. You have also worked to train school staff and to develop school-based polices to protect victims and to hold students who engage in abuse accountable. Sadly, in 2012, there was a domestic violence homicide in Marshfield that took the life of a teen dating violence victim.*

Becky Lee: There was a young woman in Marshfield who was strangled to death by her boyfriend two years ago. She was attempting to leave the relationship. It was only by a matter of timing that she was not one of our Marshfield High School students. She had just graduated four months earlier. We feel confident that she would have wanted us to learn from her situation, to build awareness and to ensure that other victims have the help and resources they need. We are doing everything we can to prevent such a horrible thing from happening to any child, obviously, but especially a child who is under our watch and our care seven hours of the day.

Q: *The case you mention demonstrates that there is no greater consequence of teen dating violence than the loss of life. What other impacts do you notice with students who are experiencing abuse?*

BL: When we talk to the administrative principals who are dealing with discipline issues, we hear that there are a number of negative impacts. Students who are exhibiting possessive and controlling behaviors will miss classes because they are looking for their girlfriends or boyfriends, trying to check up on them. Simi-

larly, victims are sometimes forced to alter their behaviors in efforts to avoid their perpetrators, which can cause them to miss class. Also, the anxiety and angst that a victim experiences prevent reading and writing from being the first thing on his or her agenda.

Peg Geegan: Yes, the anxiety and the stress levels go up, and we know the impact on learning. You are in a survival mode, and your ability to focus on learning becomes a secondary issue. It is very easy for teachers to misperceive victims' inability to focus, and then it becomes a cycle of negative consequences. And, then kids start to retreat. We want to stop that cycle in which they begin to feel helpless. We were seeing too much of that. Even if it is a few students, that is too many.

Q: *How have you successfully reached out to the teen victims who were in that cycle?*

PG: The education and awareness building has, in many ways, had a huge impact on creating support for victims among their peers, among the caring friends. Now, the friends of victims have the knowledge and concern to intervene on behalf of victims. They are then alerting guidance counselors and other adults who are able to step forward for that victim who would not have stepped forward for herself or himself.

Q: *Of all of the demands placed on educators and schools, why devote time and energy to addressing teen dating violence?*

PG: Part of our educational goal is to help young people grow into competent and confident adults who have options in their futures. And when students are struggling with these significant social and emotional issues, it creates a barrier to them reaching their dreams. Young women especially need to have the

opportunity to feel that their future is as rich as anyone else's. We see an increase in young women starting to pull back and look at themselves differently. Sometimes they are so impacted by the views that other people have of them. That can rob them of their courage when dealing with these situations. So, it is part of our educational mission to make every child feel that they can overcome obstacles and that adults are going to be there to help them.

The partnership with the Personal Development Center means that we don't have to have all of the areas of expertise. We don't have to bear the entire burden.

Becky: We can have advocates available to do safety planning with teens. We can make the help available and make it easy for teens to get help. Being with the district for 17 years, I have seen children who grew up in abusive homes now become adult victims and perpetrators. What we are doing is working to break that cycle, so that we don't see this generation carry that trend forward.

Pam Johnson is the Executive Director American Indians Against Abuse, the coalition of Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault victim programs in Wisconsin.

Q: *Since 2000, we have seen a dozen domestic violence homicides committed against Native individuals in Wisconsin. (The actual number may be higher because we cannot be certain that official reports correctly identify the race of victims.) This number may seem relatively small, but given that Native Americans represent about one percent of the state's population according to census data, it does indicate that domestic violence homicides may disproportionately affect Native Americans. If this is the case in Wisconsin, it would not be unexpected. Nationally, Native American women experience domestic violence at a rate 50% higher than other women, and the injuries that Native women sustain are on the whole more severe*

than other groups. The vast majority of this violence is perpetrated by men who are non-Native. What barriers to safety do Native victims of domestic violence experience? What needs to be done to overcome this trauma and foster safety for Native women?

A: Our lives on reservations can be comparable to living in a small town. We are more likely than not to be related by varying degrees of blood or by marriage. We have many blended families and households shared by extended family members. When domestic violence occurs, the word spreads, even unintentionally. Victim-blaming, repercussions by relatives of the abuser, minimizing the severity, or even believing the classic lines, like "he is so sorry and promises it won't happen again," are among the common reasons for not reporting abuse. Sometimes victims feel that it won't do any good to involve authorities. The process to obtain a restraining order is uncomfortable or the response for enforcement might take too long in our rural areas.

Unreported incidents of abuse are, of course, not counted in statistical reports. Data to justify programmatic funding to help meet unmet needs of Native women, then, are not always an accurate reflection of what actually occurs.

Our collective health and safety, now and in the future, requires a strong movement. Children often are desensitized to abuse because it occurs too often in front of them. This leads to generations of repeated cycles. This must end. We need to keep working toward having lives free of abuse. Strengthening the positive bonds of families and securing safe environments is imperative. The way I see it, when violence and assault affects one, it affects us all.

Contributions

Courtney Olson has a master's degree in Labor and Employment Relations and a decade of experience working in human resources management. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc. in Marinette. Below she explains why and how employers can support employees who may be victims of domestic abuse.

Employers take note: homicide is a leading cause of death on the job for women in the United States. And, about one-third of all women killed on the job are killed by a current or former intimate partner.¹

Intimate partner violence in the workplace happens in small towns and large cities across Wisconsin. A former husband shot and killed his ex-wife in the small town church where she worked. A gunman opened fire in a Brookfield salon where his estranged wife was employed. In this 2012 incident, three women were killed and another four injured. We would all like to think that things like that don't happen here in Wisconsin. We would like to believe we are safe. Unless we act, the pattern will continue.

How can employers prevent such occurrences? Victims of domestic violence are at heightened risk of violence in the workplace. After a relationship has ended, the workplace may remain the primary place where former partners know victims' locations and schedules. Work remains one of the most vulnerable places for a victim to be, as most employers are not adequately prepared to address such concerns. Domestic violence is a serious problem that affects all types of businesses. Yet, more than 70 percent of United States workplaces do not have a formal program or policy that addresses workplace violence.²

There are excellent resources available online for helping employers respond to the threat of intimate partner violence in the workplace. A free and effective online resource is www.workplacesrespond.org, a website that offers:

- Statistics on the necessity of addressing domestic violence in the workplace;
- Tools for employers to create policies to protect victims of domestic violence, as well as their coworkers;
- Quizzes that help employers identify the gaps in the knowledge of their managers in addressing domestic violence at work; and,
- A toolkit for creating proactive responses to prevent the potential risk of violence in the workplace.

Employers also need to understand that guns are involved in the vast majority (77%) of workplace homicides. Therefore, to prevent domestic violence homicides at the workplace, employers should proactively reduce the risk of gun violence. The national resource center, Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence, recommends employers take several steps to lessen the risk of firearm-related violence in the workplace. These steps include:

- Developing, publicizing and enforcing a workplace prevention policy;
- Assessing when and where at the workplace employees might be most vulnerable;
- Implementing security measures; and,
- Fostering a workplace culture that supports victims and does not excuse or minimize the perpetration of domestic violence.

The time to address these concerns is before an incident occurs. Take proactive measures now to protect your employees. We can all ensure a safer, more supportive environment for victims of domestic violence by taking these simple preventive steps.

1 Schnitzer, Patricia G., and Carol W. Runyan. "Injuries to women in the United States: an overview." *Women & Health* 23, no. 1 (1995): 9-27.

2 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Survey of Workplace Violence Prevention*, 2005. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2006).

Contributions

Molly Herrmann is an LGBTQ intimate partner violence (IPV) consultant, with experience training providers, engaging LGBTQ communities, and conducting research to develop support systems. She is a long-term member of the statewide LGBTQ IPV Committee supported by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual

Q: *Research shows that domestic violence occurs in LGBTQ relationships at roughly the same rates as heterosexual relationships. When we look at domestic violence homicides that have been identified and catalogued in the reports, there appear to be proportionally fewer domestic violence homicides in same-sex relationships. Between 2005 to 2013, we identified three LGBTQ domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin. In previous reports, we have acknowledged that we may undercount LGBTQ domestic violence homicides. Due to stigma, LGBTQ relationships can be hidden and inaccurately identified in the public record as “roommates” or “friends” or “acquaintances.” In light of your work advocating for LGBTQ victims of domestic violence, do you believe it is possible that some LGBTQ domestic violence homicides do not come to light as such?*

A: First, yes, I believe some homicides that were truly intimate partner homicides in LGBTQ relationships were not recognized as such in previous years’ reports. If you look at homicides that take place generally in Wisconsin, and if the *Domestic Violence Homicide Report* is subset of those homicides, I think it is likely that some cases were misclassified as “roommate dispute” or “dispute between friends” so that they never made it into the set of cases that were examined for classification as domestic violence homicides. It is critical that we strive to name LGBTQ domestic violence homicides correctly. I think of the victims of LGBTQ domestic violence. If we are not naming the issue from the outside, how are they going to name what is going on in their homes and seek help?

Second, it is interesting because when you mention there have been three domestic violence homicides in LGBTQ relationships since 2005 in Wisconsin, I think I know which three homicides you are talking about. I do not work in the

domestic violence field on a daily basis, but I still know about those incidents and remember them. One effective way to build awareness within communities is to talk about local events that happened there. In those two particular communities, folks knew about the incidents. Often they knew someone who was involved, and those connections are a powerful way for individuals to recognize a community-level issue that should be addressed.

Q: *So, even though the LGBTQ domestic violence homicides we know about are few in number, they are very impactful?*

A: Yes, I think so. A lot of us have various connections to the people involved. If you are working with a LGBTQ organization in Milwaukee, for example, five people there might have known the person involved. It really hits close to home. People who were connected often ask themselves, “Were there warning signs?” The point is not to feel bad about what we might have done differently, but to watch moving forward and to be better prepared to respond when we see signs of domestic abuse in same-sex or transgender relationships.

Q: *How, if at all, has the public perception of LGBTQ relationships changed since 2000 and has any such change impacted the degree of acknowledgment and awareness of domestic violence in LGBTQ relationships?*

A: The recognition of LGBTQ relationships is coming along, but obviously it is a complicated process, especially in Wisconsin, or we would have been getting married a long time ago. If it is hard to recognize a relationship, it is even harder to recognize domestic violence in that relationship. It is like walking through quick sand. It’s a slow moving process. And yet, there are people who are in violent relationships right

now. We can't wait for people to call our relationships legitimate and then start addressing domestic violence.

When a same-sex relationship ends, there is no system for dissolving all of the legal aspects of that relationship, like ownership of property or custody of children. In a non-abusive situation, it is incredibly difficult and time-consuming. I can't imagine how difficult it would be if a victim were trying to secure these types of rights while leaving a violent relationship and dealing with an abusive ex-partner. Opposite-sex couples have divorce. Same-sex couples are not afforded that process.

Clearly, LGBTQ relationships are becoming more visible. More people in Wisconsin would vote, "Yes - let LGBTQ couples get married." Parenting in LGBTQ couples is becoming more respected than it has been in the past. Yet, I don't think that acceptance of LGBTQ people is a quick translation to recognition that domestic violence happens in LGBTQ relationships, especially because those of us who are trying to prove that our relationships should be valued don't necessarily want to reveal that there are sometimes problems, that abuse happens in our relationships too. We are struggling just for recognition and acceptance, and, of course, there is a reticence to cloud the image we are trying to project by acknowledging that, just like in heterosexual relationships, domestic violence occurs in same-sex relationships, too.

We also have to remember that there are still many LGBTQ youth who are not accepted by their families, who are out on their own and who are just trying to survive. For these youth, because of stigma and homophobia, the priority is simply survival, not trying gain acceptance of their relationships from mainstream society.

Bonnie Brandl is the Director of the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Late Life, which is a project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin.

Q: Each year with seemingly more frequency we are seeing an increase in murder-suicides involving elderly couples. The assumption in the media and official reports tends to be that these murder-suicides are "mercy killings" or the result of a suicide pact, even though there is almost never firm evidence to support those characterizations. Describe some of the challenges in recognizing domestic violence among older adults and how perceptions or misperceptions portrayed in the media about these types of domestic violence homicides contribute to those challenges.

A: Often homicide-suicides in later life (and homicides without completed suicides) are inaccurately framed as "mercy killings." The media and other professionals may believe that the couple loved each other so much that they wanted to end their time on this planet together. Research indicates that in many cases the perpetrator is a batterer who has decided to kill his partner because he is losing power and control. The perpetrators are almost exclusively male. The older female victim does not know that the murder is going to occur. It is crucial to review evidence and talk to people who loved the older victim to learn about potential ongoing domestic violence.

In many cases, there may not be documented prior instances of domestic violence. The lack of documentation is not, however, an indication that there was not a prior pattern of abuse. Some older victims' attitudes towards reporting are in line with their generation's tendency to stay silent about what occurred in the home. Other times, older victims did report abuse earlier in the abusive relationships, but those reports were neither handled properly nor documented by law enforcement, which was typical for that era.

Contributions

L. Kevin Hamberger, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin. He has a long history of working to encourage health care providers to partner in the effort to prevent and end domestic violence. His research work includes evaluation of health care-based interventions. Below he discusses keeping battered women safe, from a health care perspective.

The fact that a recent study found that 65% of female domestic violence homicide victims had visited with a law enforcement officer or health care professional prior to their homicide suggests that there are many missed opportunities within the health care system to help intimate partner violence (IPV) victims.

The stark number also suggests that there are many opportunities for positive action by health care professionals. The most important starting point to assist an IPV victim is for health care professionals to ask all female patients if they are in a relationship with someone who is hitting them, hurting them, making them do sexual things they do not want to do, causing them to feel afraid and/or trying to control their life. This should be done in a private, confidential setting with no other adults or verbal children present. Such questioning can be done verbally and “in person,” or by having the patient complete a questionnaire, either on paper or, if the health system is equipped, on the computer. Privacy in asking is key, and patients should be told that their responses will be confidential and not disclosed to anyone without their consent.

For many health care professionals, the biggest problem in asking patients about IPV is a lack of knowledge of what to do if the patient says “yes.” If a patient acknowledges she is in a violent relationship, there are six things a health care provider can and should do as part of her care:

1. Provide emotional support and validation, e.g., “I am sorry that is happening to you. You have the right to be safe and respected in your relationships.” “Thank you for your courage to tell me this. We can work together to help you stay healthy and safe.”
2. Provide community resource information. This can include making “warm referrals” to local advocacy resources.
3. Help the patient assess danger. For example, increased lethality risk is related to increasing frequency and severity of violence, attempted or completed sexual IPV, threats of suicide, threats of homicide, perpetrator substance use during the assault, strangulation, use of weapons and ending the relationship.
4. Begin a safety plan, i.e., “Do you feel safe going home today?”
5. Offer follow-up within 2 weeks.
6. Document the conversation you had with the patient regarding IPV in her medical file.

Recent research from our laboratory showed that repeated asking about IPV and safety in a health care setting was related to a reduction of new violence and an increase in using safety behaviors among IPV victims/survivors, such as changing locks, changing phone numbers or developing an escape plan.

Contributions

Antonia Drew Vann is the Chief Executive Officer and founder of Asha Family Services, Inc. (Asha). Asha, located in Milwaukee, is the first and only recognized culturally-specific domestic violence prevention agency in the state for African Americans.

Since 2005, about one-quarter of the victims of domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin have been African American. On the surface, this percentage is comparable to the percentage of domestic violence homicides claiming African American lives nationally (about one-third of domestic violence homicide victims are Black).¹ Although, Wisconsin exceeds the national percentage when one considers that African Americans are only 6.5% of the state's population, compared to 13.2% of the nation as a whole. Thus, the disparate impact of domestic violence homicide is even greater in Wisconsin than the already disproportionate pattern that occurs across the country.

*A recently published study found that Wisconsin was the only state in the country in which the gap in life expectancy between Blacks and Whites significantly increased between 1990 and 2009. The growth in this form of inequality was particularly acute between Black and White women in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, this is just one in a series of national studies that show racial disparities in Wisconsin tend to be among the largest in the nation. For example, a 2014 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, found that Wisconsin is last in the nation for wellbeing of African American children.*

Clearly, Wisconsin is experiencing a long-running crisis of racial inequality that is subsuming generations. Domestic violence and domestic violence homicides appear to be one of the many manifestations of this larger crisis. And yet as a state, we seem unable or unwilling to come to terms with the reality of racial inequality. In a Marquette Law School Poll from July 2014, a startling 59.3% of Wisconsinites did not agree with the statement, "Slavery [and] discrimina-

tion have made it difficult for African Americans to work their way out of the lower class."

Q: *You know these facts and statistics. What is your reaction?*

What I have learned and experienced is that people don't know the history of African Americans in Wisconsin. They don't know simple things about the civil rights era and the periods that preceded and followed the civil rights era. They don't know about the laws that changed. They don't know about the history of discrimination in this state. They don't know about the civil rights strategies that were used in south or those used in the north.

Q: *Do you think that we northerners, or even people across the country, learn more about the civil rights struggles in the south and forget about the struggles in the north?*

A: Yes, it's easier for northerners to distance themselves from the lynching of African Americans and sexualized violence against Black women that happened in the south. But there was still virulent racism in the north, even though it looked different. In the north, you were red-lined. By operation of laws, Blacks were kept from resources and from accumulating wealth. For example, it wasn't too long ago that we could not even cross the 16th Street Bridge.

The issue of race matters, and people won't talk about it. We fail to teach our students about the reality of the civil rights movement and the injustices the movement of was responding to. These were pivotal moments in our history that are being diluted and forgotten.

Yet, I think the younger generation holds po-

1. The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community. Fact Sheet on Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community. http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf

Contributions

tential. They are exposed to more diversity and people of different racial backgrounds. My nephew has good friends who are of different races. He goes to their houses, takes trips with their families. He and his friends are the ones who are going to break down segregation. His generation sees the level of segregation that exists, especially in Wisconsin. They see the racism that is still in their families, and they have the life experiences to move beyond it.

Q: Do you think the deeply entrenched segregation that we have in Wisconsin has slowed that process down? There aren't as many opportunities for young people here to interact in the way you are talking about. Milwaukee is still the most segregated city in the country.

A: Yes.

Q: Taking a step back, we have are having a conversation about Wisconsin's place in the civil rights movement and the reasons that—and irony that—a Union state has the highest segregation and most severe racial disparities in the country. How do we connect that conversation to domestic violence homicides? Homicides are such singular acts—atrocious acts committed by individuals—that it is difficult to connect homicides to these larger issues. Although accountability for a homicide ultimately rests with an individual, how do we expand our view to see the larger histories and issues that you have talked about?

A: We have to look at the context in which these incidents occur. The devil is in the details. To take a different type of issue as an example, recently we noticed a pattern of domestic violence homicides in Milwaukee that were committed by military veterans. When we noticed the pattern, we knew we had to look at the entire context. We had to screen potential

victims and perpetrators for known risk factors related to military service, and we had to look at the set of conditions that may be putting victims at elevated risk. We looked at how homicide victims and perpetrators got to the place they ended up. We need to do the same with respect to the climate and environment of economically distressed, segregated communities in Wisconsin.

The National Institute of Justice research shows that economically distressed communities experience violence that is more frequent and more severe. Of course, those conditions are going to lead to more homicides. The stress level in these families is far greater. There are risk factors related to perpetrators' access to deadly weapons. These are areas where so much disparity already plays out. Homicides are one of these issues.

With the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, our job is to look at the cases and figure out how the situation that led up to the homicide could have been prevented. Sometimes there is a vicious cycle. How are you going to have the resources to deal with these situations when part of the problem is that the community is severely economically depressed? There were thousands of manufacturing jobs in this community. People had access to resources. You don't have that anymore.

And, we don't have enough community-based and culturally-specific services for people. For poor, inner city African Americans, help seeking behaviors keep them locked into the community. Domestic violence is an issue people only want to talk about within their communities. So, if communities don't have the resources, help doesn't always reach the people in need.

Advocate Reflections

At End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, we believe that our history of reporting on domestic violence homicides has heightened the attention of communities to the issue of domestic violence and helped galvanize prevention efforts. As part of our move to open up the pages of this report to a variety of perspectives, we asked domestic violence victim advocates across Wisconsin to reflect on their communities' work to prevent domestic violence homicides. We used 2000, the first year of the publication of the *Domestic Violence Homicide Report*, as a benchmark and asked advocates what progress they have seen since then. We also asked them to describe some of the most persistent challenges to keeping victims safe in their communities.

Above all, advocates said that since the year 2000 the response to domestic violence homicides has improved because their communities have improved coordination among the systems and institutions that respond to domestic violence, such as law enforcement, the court system, victim service providers and child welfare workers. Several advocates specifically mentioned the development or improvement of Community Coordinated Response (CCR) Teams as an important step in fostering collaboration among stakeholders.

Illustrating the benefits of enhanced coordination, advocates pointed to a number of policy improvements that were born out collaborative efforts. For example, advocates in at least two communities mentioned that judges now ensure that victims seek counseling and do safety planning before the court will grant victims' requests to dismiss restraining orders. Others mentioned more rigorous attention to domestic violence by the criminal justice system, such as requiring offenders to appear before a judge before bail is granted. Another agency discussed the fact that outreach to victims has been improved because advocates now have a physical space within the District Attorney's office, so they can offer services to victims and help lighten the burden of participation in the criminal justice process.

Related to greater community coordination, advocates noted increased community awareness and engagement. Advocates said that victim service agencies now have a larger presence in communities and that more community members and potential victims know about the services that are available. One program said that law enforcement in its area has stepped up and now works with advocates to hold community education sessions. Another agency saw an impact after advocates worked with health care providers to identify victims and make referrals. Community members reported that they were then routinely asked about family violence when visiting health care professionals. Advocates also mentioned increased outreach to teens and youth about dating violence and healthy relationships.

As stated above, we also asked about the most persistent challenges to preventing domestic violence homicides. The most common responses we heard centered around the approach that law enforcement and other officials take to victims, or at least some victims. Advocates noted that many victims are marginalized because their behaviors are misunderstood. Advocates said that many responders still do not have a full grasp of the dynamics between victims and perpetrators in domestic violence cases and do not understand the effects of trauma on abused individuals. An advocate noted that officials treat a victim's reluctance to leave the relationship as sign that abuse is less than serious, when such behavior often is an indication that the victim is extremely traumatized and fearful. Another advocate told how

Advocate Reflections

victims who use drugs tend to be ignored by authorities in her community. The advocate pointed out that this practice plays into the hands of abusers who force or encourage their victims' drug use, leaving victims more vulnerable and essentially without access to the protection of the law. One agency noted that judges in its community do not take a consistent approach to perpetrators. There, judges often treat domestic violence as an "anger issue" and do not order perpetrators to batterers' treatment programs that addresses the underlying beliefs and behaviors that cause perpetrators to abuse their partners. Advocates said these barriers to safety could be lessened if advocates had better relationships with key players in their community, but, in some cases, advocates faced resistance to open and equal dialogue on these critical issues.

Advocates also discussed those barriers that keep victims in abusive relationships generally. They noted that victims still experience feelings of fear and shame that prevent them from coming forward. They described how economic dependence on abusers and a lack of economic opportunity prevented victims from living independently. They pointed out that some victims stay in abusive relationships because they are concerned about losing their children, especially when victims would be required to take on their perpetrators in child custody and placement actions.

In a poignant comment, one advocate said that her community's resolve to reach out victims tends to become highly focused in the aftermath of a homicide. But, she also recounted how that momentum tends to wane after a bit of time has passed and the homicide is no longer a main topic of community conversation. The advocate identified this tendency of not always following through as a barrier to preventing future homicides. We urge readers of the report who are fortunate enough to have not had a recent homicide in their communities not to wait for a tragedy to occur before making domestic violence homicide prevention a priority. For those who are not so fortunate, we encourage them to strive to maintain their community's commitment over the long term.

Methodology

Our definition of homicide is the killing of one human being by another. This encompasses criminal, justifiable, self-defense and reckless homicides. Homicides were considered domestic violence related if:

- The victims and perpetrators were spouses or partners, former spouses or former partners, adults with children in common, and adults or teens that had been in a dating relationship.
- Beginning with the report for 2010, the case involved other adult family members, such as a parent or grandparent killed by an adult child or grandchild. We do not include these cases, however, if the defendant was found not guilty by reason of mental illness or lacked the capacity to stand trial.
- It was a homicide of a person other than the intimate partner and it occurred within the context of domestic violence. This includes cases where the circumstances of the murder included obsessive control of the perpetrator's current or former partner that extended to her or his new partner and the homicide of a bystander or someone who attempted to protect a domestic violence victim from future harm.
- The homicide was a child death that occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between adult intimate partners. For example, when a partner or estranged partner killed their children in order to exact revenge on his partner.

The report also accounts for overall deaths related to domestic violence homicide, including perpetrator deaths. Most perpetrator deaths are suicides. The count of domestic violence homicide victims occasionally includes perpetrators killed by responding law enforcement officers (homicide by legal intervention) or killed by someone in defense of another person who is under attack. The victim count also includes law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty when responding to domestic violence.

In each case of homicide-suicide, we list the murdered person in our heading as the homicide victim. We seek to be as consistent and as accurate as possible year to year in the homicides included in the report.

Research begins with an ongoing search for news accounts of domestic violence-related homicides. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin tracks daily media coverage of domestic violence homicides in major Wisconsin newspapers, which is supplemented with internet searches. In some cases, we contact one or more of the following sources for clarification of information obtained from news sources: local domestic violence programs, district attorneys' offices, adult protective services, law enforcement agencies and coordinated community response coordinators in the counties where the homicides took place. We use the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access Program to research the criminal history of the homicide perpetrator and victims.

To further identify the domestic violence homicides that occur in Wisconsin in a given year, we examine the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) by local law enforcement agencies. UCR fields include: reporting agency; county; homicide date, type, and location; victim and offender demographics; weapon used; relationship between the perpetrator and victim; and, circumstance of the homicide. The UCR does not provide the name of the victim or the offender, however. We use the coding and details in the UCR reports to identify domestic violence-related homicides that might have been missed via monitoring news stories.

We seek to uniformly report the facts of the case for each incident. However, if additional information is unavailable, we report only the simple demographic and case information available via

published accounts, CCAP records and the UCR. Reporting on domestic violence-related homicides is complicated since we cannot know the exact characteristics of the relationship. Our knowledge is ultimately limited by the information reported to community systems and friends and family by the involved parties prior to the homicide and how much of that knowledge finds its way into the official record.

Due to confidentiality laws, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin can only obtain records of public access; data such as death certificates are not available to us. We know this methodology is imperfect and can result in undercounts in at least three areas:

Children killed by domestic violence abusers: We include children who were killed as a direct result of a domestic violence incident. We believe this count is low since a homicide of a child is often viewed as an isolated incident of child abuse. An investigation of a child homicide can often overlook past domestic violence or the domestic violence might not be included in the public record. While we believe that a larger number of child deaths are directly related to an ongoing pattern of domestic abuse, our current methods of tracking homicides do not allow us to consistently identify children killed by perpetrators of domestic violence.

LGBT relationships: It is likely that we undercount domestic violence homicides that occur in lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) relationships. Due to the stigma that is placed on LGBT communities, relationships can be hidden and the nature of a relationship might not be accurately identified in the public record of a homicide. An LGBT relationship might be coded as “friend,” “roommate” or “other known to victim.” Where the victim was reported as single and there was no apparent forced entry to the home or scene, the homicide may go unrecognized as related to LGBT intimate partner violence.

Homicides of American Indian and Alaska Native women: National rates of homicide victimization against American Indian and Alaska Native women are high and in some counties comprised primarily of tribal lands, murder rates are over ten times the national average, with Native women being most likely to be killed by their intimate partners. Tribal communities are very diverse socially, culturally, and economically, with many women living in urban areas off of tribal lands. Intimate partner homicides—as well as homicides in general—may not receive attention from the dominant news media and therefore not come to our attention as we compile data for the homicide report.

In compiling our summary data, we seek to include the total number of homicides committed in Wisconsin in a given year. We use information from the Uniform Crime Report data submitted to DOJ and, if available for the year in question, information from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Each agency compiles its data from various reporting methods including death certificates, police reports, coroner, medical examiner and hospital records.

Wisconsin Deaths Related to Domestic Violence Homicide

Year	Homicide Deaths	Suicides	Total
2013	43	12	55
2012	48	4	52
2011	34	3	37
2010	51	7	58
2009	52	15	67
2008	36	10	46
2007	41	10	51
2006	28	8	36
2005	40	6	46
2004	28	5	33
2003	45	16	61
2002	38	11	49
2001	33	9	42
2000	33	8	41
Totals	550	124	674

About End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

At End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, we strive to be the statewide voice for survivors of domestic violence.

- We educate shelter and program volunteers and advocates, law enforcement, legislators and community members to provide safety and support to victims.
- We strive to shift Wisconsin from the attitudes and beliefs that cause domestic violence to values of mutual respect and equality.
- We partner with communities in the effort to prevent and end domestic abuse.



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Authors:

Sara Krall, Community Response and Homicide Prevention Coordinator
Tony Gibart, Public Policy and Communications Coordinator

Researcher:

Alyssa Jarocki, Homicide Project Intern

Editors:

Colleen Cox, Education Coordinator
Patti Seger, Executive Director

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Finally, we want to acknowledge each and every individual life taken by domestic violence, and their surviving families and communities.