Women are being raped, trafficked, beaten, and murdered in unprecedented numbers in:

- Afghanistan
- Sudan
- Vermont
- all of the above

Correct Answer: All of the above.

The 2004 Vermont Crime Report was released in August by the Vermont Crime Information Center and although total crime reports decreased from 2003-2004 by 4.7%, forcible rapes increased from 117 to 185 (58%). Even if we compare the numbers to a five year average, forcible rapes for 2004 increased by 20%. The following details of these numbers are also informative: the average age of rape victims was 21 years old, with approximately 47% being under the age of 18; in 74% of the cases the defendant was an acquaintance of the victim; average age of defendants arrested for forcible rape was 30 years of age, and injuries were sustained by 41% of all rape victims.

We have got to do better in Vermont; we deserve better. The domestic and sexual violence programs in this state continue to have an increase in the numbers of Vermonters seeking services. Simply attending to the immediate crisis of victimization, though honorable and necessary, is not enough. We have to stop this scourge. Through the expansion of services and the improved focus toward root causes of violence against women we can move forward toward this goal.

A revision of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is currently working its way through Congress. This landmark legislation, first passed in 1994, provides life-saving hotlines, shelters, services and laws to protect victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. All of our Congressional contingents have signed on as sponsors to show their support. The proposed provisions will provide increased funding for sexual and domestic violence work.

The dedication that our national and state representatives have shown in support of our work is beyond measure. We take this moment to say a heartfelt and loud Thank You to Senators Patrick Leahy and Jim Jeffords, and to Representative Bernie Sanders for their steadfast support of the Violence Against Women Act.

continued on page 2

Inside this Issue:
- Pages 2-3 Listening to Incarcerated Women...
- Pages 4-5, 10 Domestic Violence Awareness Month Calendar
- Pages 6-7 Women, Violence, and the Media
- Pages 7, 11 Deceit in the Courtroom
- Pages 8-9 Highlights: Vermont Partnerships
- Page 12 Vermont Network Member Program List
Message from the Statewide Coordinator
continued from page 1

How Can We Do Better In Vermont?

• **Speak out:** educate yourself on the issues.
• **Support a Healthy Relationship Curriculum in the schools.**
• **Support a friend who may be experiencing abuse.**
• **Support your local agency** (see List of Member Programs on last page).

---

**Accessing Justice, Accessing Healing:**
Listening to Incarcerated Women in Vermont

By Chani Waterhouse, Program Support Coordinator

Susan (not her real name) has struggled with drug addiction for all of her adult life. After serving a five-year sentence related to her drug use, she felt that she had turned her life around; that was when her husband started beating her and she started using drugs again. “I have a $1000-$1500/day habit, and I’ll shoplift all day long to get it,” Susan told me recently when I met her at the Dale Correctional Facility in Waterbury, where she is currently incarcerated. “I’m in here because I use drugs and shoplifted to use.” Susan is back in jail, has lost custody of her four kids, and finds her personal support systems strained to the breaking point. As she describes it, “All I have is my mom, and my mom is about rock bottom out.”

Susan sees access as a central issue in her story. “I needed resources helping me get my kids back,” Susan explained. “SRS never even talked to me about a domestic violence program. I should have been working with a domestic violence program.” Susan says she also needed help staying clean from drugs: “I admitted ‘I’m a crack addict.’ I needed [Corrections] to be on me. I needed structure. I needed urine tests. I needed treatment.” She feels that the system failed her; had she been able to access needed supports, she wonders if she could have stayed out of jail.

Susan’s story is a common one among women in Vermont’s jails, which are filled with unprecedented numbers of women. Jill Evans, Director of Women Offender Services at the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC), reports that Vermont has seen a 575% increase in the numbers of women incarcerated in the last 10 years, most for non-violent crimes.

Evans also sees access as a central issue for incarcerated women, and agrees that systems have often failed the women who end up in jail. “When I look at their profiles and their life histories, I see trauma that could have been prevented, and trauma survivors we could have responded to much more effectively,” she explains.

According to Evans, a DOC study found that 88% of women in Vermont’s prisons are survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. Many have severe histories of trauma across their life spans, with violence and abuse often perpetrated by family members and partners. Upwards of 95% have problems with drug or alcohol when they came into prison, and many started using substances at young ages. Most are single mothers living at or below the poverty level. Most pose less of a threat to community safety than their male counterparts, who are significantly more likely to be incarcerated for violent crimes. By contrast, the women’s crimes are predominantly those involving petty theft, low-level drug use and sales, minor fraud and prostitution.

Most national studies confirm the prevalence of abuse in the histories of incarcerated women, and the link between violence in women’s lives and their entry into the criminal justice system as defendants. Survivors of violence are at increased risk for substance abuse and other coping strategies that can draw women into criminal activity, particularly when they have limited access to needed supports. Once women are incarcerated, their access issues mushroom. Women in the Dale and Windsor
Correctional Facilities reported a long list of challenges they face in accessing needed resources inside and outside the prisons. While many say they have learned to live with limited access to material goods, the limits on access to caseworkers, counselors and advocates present more of a challenge.

Star Porta, a woman housed at Dale, reported that heavy caseloads for caseworkers means that “It’s hard to get people from outside agencies to call you back,” added Joellen Holland, also at Dale. “I think that workers think we have more time [than their non-incarcerated clients].”

Porta and Holland echoed Susan’s assessment that while the mental health clinicians at Dale are wonderful, there aren’t enough of them to meet the enormous need of the women housed there. They described waiting in line for a 15-minute meeting with a counselor who might need to respond to a crisis phone call in the middle of their session. Of her counselor, Porta said “She’s great, but there’s no time.” According to Evans, about 75% of incarcerated women are on the facilities’ mental health rosters, compared to about a quarter of incarcerated men.

Substance abuse treatment is another urgent need for many of the women in Vermont’s jails, with many women reporting that existing programs are too short and have long waiting lists.

Like most women in Vermont’s jails, all of the women I talked to are mothers, and all stressed that one of the most painful aspects of incarceration is being separated from their children and having only limited access to communication and visits with them.

As women prepare to be released from jail, a whole new set of access issues emerges, with the shortage of affordable housing being among the most vexing. Jean Lathrop, a community volunteer with an advocacy group called Women Evolving (W.E.), told me that many of the women she has worked with were kept in jail beyond their minimum sentences simply because they did not have residences outside the jail. Lathrop added that by “going to jail, they lose whatever they have in their lives, and it takes that much longer for them to re-establish themselves when they get out.

While Evans would like to see women able to access needed services and support while in jail, she also is concerned that the Department of Corrections is being asked to provide resources that would be better provided by other organizations. “People should not be sent to prison because that’s where they are going to get what they need. While this is not the norm, individual women have reported wanting to come back to prison, because that’s where they felt safe, where they were able to sleep, where they had a roof over their heads, food to eat, and services – they should be able to access those things in their communities.”

The women I talked to often agreed that communities could be doing more, but also stress that having access to resources and support while incarcerated could make the difference for many women. Shakera Robb spoke eloquently of the powerful impact a mentor made on her while she was incarcerated. Though she believes her needs were shared by many women, she thinks her positive experience was unusual. “What I most needed was a safe place where I could be real with me,” she explained, and her mentor provided that safe place. “No shame, no image – where I could look at me, good and bad. Everybody needs love – we’re all the same that way. And everybody needs someone to root for them, especially coming from a background of incarceration.” WOW! Robb believes the success she has had since being released from prison is in large part due to the ongoing support she received, and from being released to a women’s shelter where her physical needs were met so she could focus on getting her life back together.

One place where women can get support while in jail is in DIVAS (Discussing Intimate Partner Violence and Accessing Support) groups. DIVAS is a project of the Vermont Network in collaboration with the Department of Corrections which brings advocates from Network programs into the women’s jails to offer educational support groups and individual advocacy.

“Women spend a lot of time blaming themselves for the domestic violence in their lives,” said Terri Fisk, Executive Director of New Beginnings in Windsor and co-facilitator of the DIVAS group in the Windsor Correctional Facility. “Because it’s a group, they see that what they’ve experienced is so similar to what others have experienced, and that really undermines the self-blame. Even though they live in such close quarters I don’t think they get many opportunities to really talk to each other and see the patterns.”

The women I talked to repeatedly emphasized the importance of having access to this type of support in tandem with needed resources like housing, help with legal issues, and contact with their children. With these pieces in place, they said, real healing could happen and they could do the work to transform their lives.
Domestic Violence Awareness Month
Statewide Activities

What will you do to end domestic and sexual violence?

This year, we will be asking Vermonters to “take the pledge.” Many member programs of the Vermont Network will be working with their community Domestic Violence Task Force to collect signatures from community citizens who are willing to publicly acknowledge that domestic violence is a problem we all must work to end together. Tip sheets will be available providing information on what you can do in your community, at work, school, and other places you are connected to. If you would like to receive copies of these “Letters to the Community” (electronic or hard copy) please make requests to library@vtnetwork.org or (802) 223-1302 x29.

The Network will also be working with local and statewide newspapers to publish a series of articles, created by advocates and allies, which focus on issues of access to community resources for victims and survivors. We will also be promoting access for victims to the many wonderful services that Network programs have to offer. Samplings of these articles are found here in the Newsletter! Keep your eyes open for more in your local paper during the month of October.

The Council’s “Vermont Leadership Forum To End Domestic Violence”

Please join the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence and the Vermont Network for this co-sponsored DVAM event. As domestic violence continues to be a major health, economic, and safety concern for all communities throughout Vermont, leaders from around the state will convene in Montpelier to sign on to the Leadership Pledge to end domestic violence, to raise awareness and to increase response to domestic violence. We will also recognize those who have taken strong, active steps to end domestic violence in Vermont. Mark your calendars for Tuesday October 18th.

Call Robyn for details at (802) 223-1302 x27 or email: vtcdv@yahoo.com

The Silent Witness Project

This initiative started in Minnesota in 1990 when a few woman artists decided to honor the fatal victims of domestic violence in their state. They created life size wooden figures of the 27 women that had died that year at the hands of their intimate partners/ex-partners. By 1994 efforts were coordinated to include all fifty states and in 1997, 1500 wooden figures were brought to the Washington Monument as a way of breaking the silence nationally. Placed over the heart of each Silent Witness is a shield providing information about the person. See Voices Against Violence, Umbrella, and AWARE for regional vigils.

“Breaking the Silence: Children’s Stories”

On October 20th at 5AM and October 26th at 8PM, PBS will air Breaking the Silence: Children’s Stories; a documentary focusing on the effects that witnessing domestic violence has on children. This follows the 2001 showing of Breaking the Silence: Journey of Hope which relays women’s perspectives of domestic violence survival. The second installment in this series is an effort to raise awareness about the indirect and often hidden victims of intimate partner violence. Children’s Stories promotes suggested system reforms to strengthen the response to and safety of children and youth. (The Vermont Network will have this documentary in its library.)
WomenSafe - Middlebury, Vermont
Theresa Zubretsky, a national figure in the women’s movement, will present an afternoon workshop followed by a community forum in the evening. There will be multiple showings of the video “Windows” - an Addison County production that focuses on the connection between domestic violence & substance abuse. You are invited to come and participate in a celebration of the family with a community Tree Planting.
[call 388-9180 or email info@womensafe.net for further details]

Rutland County Women’s Network and Shelter - Rutland, Vermont
Two fun fundraisers coming up! An All Day Poker Party on October 16th from 11 AM to 7pm at the Rutland Country Club, 275 Grove Street. Volunteers are needed (ages 21 and older). Also, on Saturday, October 22nd, a Drag Show from 8-9 PM at the All Barony of Vermont Shooka Dookas Gay Bar on Evelyn Street.
There will be an Empathy Training Workshop on Thursday, October 27th at the Police Station Conference Room on Evelyn Street.
[call 775-6788 or email rcwnsreb@yahoo.com for further details]

AWARE - Hardwick, Vermont
There will be a COMMUNITY AWARENESS DAY at the Berlin Mall on October 8th, and AWARE will be participating in “Silent Witness”, along with distributing informational bathroom packets.
“I LOVE M E!” — An educational support group on Self Care for survivors of domestic and sexual violence will be every Wednesday from 5:30-7:00 PM, from Oct. 5th to Dec. 7th. Free with refreshments served.
A COMMUNITY DINNER will be held on Wednesday, October 12th at 6PM. All are invited by AWARE, with their Teen Group support, to a free, full fledged turkey dinner and informative program presented by the teens. We hope to have our legislative representatives present.
“This Is Your Brain On Television” will be presented by Amy Hornblas at the Hardwick Community Learning Exchange! Three 2-hour sessions, from 6-8 PM will be held on Tuesday, October 18th, Thursday, October 20th and Tuesday, October 25th. (Please plan to attend all 3) FREE! A curriculum designed to teach people of all ages about the influence media images can have on behavior and society. Families are strongly encouraged to attend together. The book, “This Is Your Brain On Television” will be given to each participant.
“Allying With Your Inner Tiger” is a free, two-hour workshop from 6-8 PM on Wednesday, October 19th. A “mental self-defense” training with the goal of helping your intellectual brain understand our natural defense instincts. Learn to trust your intuition.
[call 472-6463 or email aware@vtlink.net for further details]

Women Helping Battered Women - Burlington, Vermont
On September 30th, WHBW will have a Speakout to include a press conference and opening vigil, and a closing vigil and second press conference at the end of October. Look for Letters to the Editor throughout October.
There will be a faith-based initiative with discussions for adult and youth groups, and a No Tolerance for Domestic Violence signature campaign sponsored by the Chittenden County Domestic Violence Task Force. The WHBW Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony will be held October 19th.
Spousal/partner rape information cutouts will be built and displayed.
[call 658-3131 or email whbw@whbw.org for further details]

NEKCA / Step O.N.E. - Newport, Vermont
Two important trainings are planned for October: Date Rape Drugs is open to all professionals; and, tentatively, Domestic Violence 101 for Orleans County court guardian ad litems and community caregivers.
In the foyer of the Hebbard State Building there will be a resource table throughout the month. NEKCA/Step O.N.E. will have it open house on October 27th. There will be a Fundraising Raffle, with the 1st prize being an Ethan Allen Nightstand (value $450). Tickets can be purchased till the day of the drawing, the Open House on October 27th.
The area schools will be the home to a poster campaign in partnership with the NEKCA Teen Center and the education committee of the Domestic Violence Task Force.
[call 334-0148 or email stepone@nekca.org for further details]

continued on page 10
Women, Violence and the Media:
How can we condemn violence in the real world if we condone it in the media?

By Bethany Pombar, Training and Outreach Manager

The Vermont Network would like to add its voice to the rising din questioning the depiction of violence throughout the media. We see the violence repeatedly portrayed through the media as one of the root causes of violent behavior in our society, and specifically, violence against women.

Consumption of media such as internet, television, video games, and magazines is a number one pastime for many Americans, with the average American adult consuming three hours of media a day and children consuming even more. What exactly are the messages transmitted through these media? What are the messages we are given about our relationships, how should we treat each other and how do we expect to be treated?

What we see overwhelmingly are violent acts depicted as entertainment. For example, sixty-one percent of broadcast programming (television) produced from 1995 through 1997 portrayed interpersonal violence in an entertaining or glamorized manner, with the highest proportion of violence in children's programs. Additionally, almost 25% of the most popular video games feature violence against women. Still more shocking, 100% of all animated feature films produced in the United States between 1937 and 1999 featured some form of violence.

Is the media normalizing violence through continual exposure? And if so, what impact is this normalization having upon our society?

The reality is that on average more than three women are murdered by their boyfriends or husbands in this country every day. In Vermont alone, there were 8,512 victims of domestic and/or sexual violence served by the programs of the Vermont Network in 2004. (Keep in mind that these are only the victims that seek our services). As appalling as this statistic is to many of us, it is lost in the sea of violent imagery that we are confronted with in the daily onslaught of media atrocities, belittling and distancing the fact that these real acts of violence happen to real people, here in our own neighborhoods.

We flip open the current magazines and see images such as the ones sighted here. The images appear to say to us that women are not valuable. They can be pushed around, beaten, and gagged. Women are objects that can be treated without respect or dignity. We constantly see women’s bodies being picked apart in advertisements and television; legs here, abdomen there, lips, eyes, backside. Rarely do we see a whole woman, which makes it easier to objectify her. When we do see a whole woman, she is often in a subservient position, in a provocative position, ready to serve a man, or worst - appearing dead — a soulless body. Women are seldom shown as persons who possess confidence, strength, intelligence, and autonomy.

What effect is this having on the self-image of girls? What entitlement is this portraying to boys? What will the consequences be?

Studies have shown that attitudes towards violence are formed at a young age and tend to “stick.” If we normalize acts of violence against women by repeatedly showing children and youth that violence is a game (with no consequences), sexy, or funny, then how can we expect to end violence against women in our society? Throughout their lives, both males and females will be subjected to images of violence, a significant amount of which is aimed at women. At the same time, they will be receiving messages about respect and healthy relationships from schools, parents, and organizations working for positive change – if they are lucky. Yet, most humans do what they see, what they are engulfed in. So how can we condemn violence in the real world if we condone it in the media? We can’t.

Through awareness and action we can begin to put an end to the oppression and degradation of human life we see daily in the media and together we can help prevent and end violence against women.

continued on next page
Deceit in the Courtroom:
Understanding Batterer Manipulation in Custody Disputes

By Jenny Beaudin Ring, Legal Issues Coordinator

I’m more and more aware lately that the benefit and dilemma of having any professional expertise is that you develop an intimate knowledge of your subject matter. Like it or not, you become the expert – a benefit. The field of domestic and sexual violence lends no exception. The dilemma for advocates, however, has to do with the subject matter. Understanding the dynamics of abuse, in all its forms, feels like a heavy load to carry. For me, it follows me home, influences my parenting - it more or less changes my perception of the world in which we live. I struggle with how much information to share. How do I deliver the reality to those that I am concerned about? Sharing this kind of information is not always welcome; people don’t necessarily want to be educated on battering – and frankly, they don’t want to face the reality that violence is prevalent and epidemic in our culture. I don’t blame them.

My struggle is particularly apparent when discussing child custody issues in divorce cases where one parent is abusive. I’ve heard many stories about batterers using family court proceedings to gain easy access to their victims – with the pretense of wanting more time with the couple’s children. It doesn’t seem to matter if Dad was never involved with his children before the divorce or even when partner abuse is substantiated, he is often successful in gaining joint custody through continued litigation and skillful attorneys. Mom is frequently blamed for every abnormality that the child(ren) or family exhibit. She lives fearful and powerless over what happens during unsupervised visits with Dad because he has up until this point been uninvolved and uninterested in the children. And, if the litigation continues, batterers have been historically successful in gaining full custody of the children and deceiving the court into thinking that Mom is the dangerous parent. In the end, Mom may have very little contact or rights to her children and no control over the physical and/or psychological damage that batterers are known to inflict on their children.

It sounds bizarre, right? How can anyone give the incredibly challenging responsibility of raising children to a parent that is abusive? How can anyone deny custody to the parent that has been struggling to keep the child(ren) safe? (This is where I lose folks – ‘surely this is some isolated incident that she has blown out of proportion…”’).

The phenomenon is the result of many forces working in tandem. First and foremost, batterers are excellent at manipulation. What they present to the public is a suave, concerned, considerate and very responsible father. In the courtroom, they effectively plead their case and provide evidence of their stellar parenting skills. Additionally, they tend to have more resources to work with; namely time and money. Mom, on the other hand, is commonly maxed out, working one or more jobs, managing childcare, struggling financially, and striving to make sense of the physical and psychological abuse she and her children have dealt with for months or years.

Secondly, these cases often result in years of litigation with seemingly no compromise or agreement provided. Mom may have very little contact or rights to her children and no control over the physical and psychological damage that batterers are known to inflict on their children.
Vermont’s Transitional Employment Program

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Vermont Department of Labor are working together to implement the Transitional Employment Program, an unemployment benefits program created in the 2004-2005 legislative session to provide temporary, partial wage-replacement to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking who need to leave work because of violence and who are ineligible for traditional unemployment compensation benefits. These survivors/victims who have left work voluntarily because of the violence they are experiencing may apply to the Department of Labor for benefits through this program. For more information or to apply for benefits please contact the State of Vermont, Department of Labor, Claim Center, Toll Free 1- 877-214-3330, TTY 1- 800- 650-4152, Web: www.labor. vermont.gov. If you have questions, concerns or comments about the program please contact Jill Richard at the Vermont Network at 802-223-1302 or jill@vtnetwork.org.

Vermont Victim Survivors Of Crime Council

Congratulations to Sue Russell for receiving the Edith Surgan Award from the National Office of Victim Assistance. This national award is given to a survivor for their outstanding leadership in victims’ rights activism. We are extremely proud of Sue and all the work she does within the Council and in our state for victim/survivors.

The Vermont Council On Domestic Violence

The Council is happy to announce the hiring of its new director, Robyn M aguire. Robyn joins the Council with several years of experience working to end violence against women, including the Director of Field Development and Training at The Freedom to M arry Coalition of Massachusetts and the Coordinator of Outreach and Education at The Elizabeth Stone House, a Boston-based mental health alternative for women survivors of violence.

The Council was formed by a joint executive order from the Governor and the Supreme Judicial Court in 2000. It is a multidisciplinary body with over 40 members, one of which is the Vermont Network. Council members provide support to county task forces in developing effective community response strategies to end domestic violence.

New Partnership with the Vermont Agency of Human Services

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) are working together to develop a plan to institutionalize domestic violence knowledge and expertise within and throughout the Agency of Human Services. In addition to the Vermont Network and the AHS, the Vermont Center for Crime Victims Services and the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence signed onto a Memorandum of Understanding to support the work of an agency-wide Domestic Violence Task Force. The Task Force is in the process of drafting a set of initial recommendations for improving the AHS response to domestic violence to be presented to the Secretary of the AHS in the fall. Through its combined efforts and expertise, this partnership hopes to enhance current practice, support an integrated service system and support the institutional change AHS is seeking from its recent and ongoing reorganization.

(continued on next page)
Deaf Victims Advocacy Services or (DVAS)
Vermont's DVAS is important to the Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf blind communities because there are no other agencies specifically knowledgeable in the culture and language of this population, especially when talking about sexual and domestic violence. In addition to providing guidance and support to individuals, DVAS also provides information and training to public agencies such as police, court, hospital staff and shelter staff on how to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing people. The organization becomes the link between a person in need of services and the agency responsible for providing it by identifying and addressing language and communication barriers.

What's New at DVAS:
Parenting Skills Group Sessions to Deaf Parents:
- communication skills & healthy discipline methods
- how to encourage a non-deaf child to appreciate their parents' Deaf Culture
- chance to share challenges and joys of being Deaf parents.

Sex Education Curriculum To Deaf Students:
- values and self esteem
- anatomy- your bodies / STD's, abstinence, birth control
- decision making

Videos (in American Sign Language and open captioning)
- Deaf Victims Guide To Staying At A Shelter
- What is Abuse

Congratulations
To Keri Darling, Director at DVAS, for being recognized at the National Conference in Washington D.C., as a leader and pioneer in providing Deaf victim services, and to Alwayne Worcester, DVAS advocate, and Keri Darling, for receiving an award from Deaf Women United for their outstanding contribution to the community.

[For further details call TTY (802) 479-1934 / or voice to TTY: dial 711 and give operator # 479-1934 / or email kdarling@dvas.org]

From the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2005.
- Family violence accounted for 11% of all reported and unreported violence between 1998 and 2002. Of these roughly 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members, 49% were crimes against spouses.
- The majority (73%) of family violence victims were female. Females were 84% of spouse abuse victims and 86% of victims of abuse at the hands of a dating partner.
- Most family violence victims and offenders were white (74% & 79% respectively).
- About 22% of murders in 2002 were family murders. Nearly 9% were murders of a spouse.
- Approximately 60% of family violence victimizations were reported to police between 1998 and 2002.
- Among the 2.1 million incidents of family violence reported to police between 1998 and 2002, 36% resulted in an arrest.
Voices Against Violence - St. Albans, Vermont

Along with a Purple Ribbon & Banner Campaign, VAV will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary in October! Details TBA.

There will be Topic Brown Bag Luncheons from noon to 1 every Wednesday throughout October at the Department of Children & Families. Some of the topics will be impact of domestic violence on children, Relief from Abuse orders and safety planning, etc. (also offered at Richford & the Islands).

The Silent Witness Project will be displayed at various locations throughout October.
[call 524-8538 or email voices@cvoeo.org for further details]

Battered Women's Services and Shelter - Barre, Vermont

An annual event, Speakers at Noon, will take place on October 3rd at the steps of Montpelier City Hall. The focus this year will be the critical role of Law Enforcement in domestic violence issues. There will be several speakers from the Washington County State's Attorney and local Law Enforcement agencies.
[call 476-6010 or email bwss@sover.net for further details]

Umbrella - St. Johnsbury, Vermont

A Silent Witness March and Vigil will be held at 5:30 on Thursday, October 6th, beginning at Court House Park in St. Johnsbury and ending at the Visitor's Center. Umbrella will honor Vermont's murdered victims of domestic violence, and present our 6th Annual Domestic Violence Service Recognition Award to a community partner.

The Annual Meeting and Dinner will be held on October 17th.

There will be a variety of events and displays at Lyndon State College throughout October.
On Saturday, October 22nd, join Umbrella for Grace Potter and the Nocturnals at the St. Johnsbury School. VIP tickets ensuring seats in the first three rows plus other goodies and discounts can be purchased for $25, with proceeds from VIP tickets to benefit Umbrella.
[call 748-8645 or email zoe@umbrellavt.org for further details]

Project Against Violent Encounters - Bennington, Vermont

At the beginning of October, PAVE will publicly announce the completion of the Domestic Violence Protocol by the Bennington County Domestic Violence Task Force. The Protocol includes procedures from Law Enforcement, the State's Attorney, Department of Corrections, Department For Children and Families, the Courts, and PAVE.

On October 15th, PAVE will host the Third Annual Pancake Breakfast to honor volunteers and community members who tirelessly work to support victims and survivors of domestic violence. We reach a broad base of community members for the purpose of education and outreach. The breakfast will include a "supervised visitation" skit that will demonstrate how a non-custodial parent, child and Family Time monitor might spend time together at the Family Time Visitation Center.

October 29th: Wal-M art supports Domestic Violence Awareness Month. PAVE will have an informational table in front of the store from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This kind of support by the business community is needed and appreciated.
[call 442-2370 or email pave1@adelphia.net for further details]

Do you know someone who would like to receive the newsletter?

❑ Yes! Please send the VN ADSV Newsletter to:

Name __________________________________________
Address ________________________________________
City __________________ State ________ Zip __________

Mail/E-mail to: VN ADSV, P.O. Box 405,
Montpelier, VT 05601 or library@vtnetwork.org
Deceit in the Courtroom
continued from page 7

between the parties, adding to the problem of overloaded dockets. The case is categorized as one of “high conflict”. In response, the court struggles to find a way to resolve the problem. The use of outside professionals (such as Guardians ad Litem, Parent Coordinators, and forensic evaluators) is one popular solution. These specialized professionals take the time to investigate the facts and provide information to the judge. They serve as a valuable tool in the criminal justice system. However, without substantial training in domestic and sexual violence, they have the potential to do more harm than good, playing in to the batterer’s strategy, siding against Mom, and impeding safety for the children.

When the case does come before a judge, it is higher role to decide where a child should live; where she/he is safe, supported and cared for. According to Vermont statute, judges must also consider which parent will “foster a positive relationship and frequent and continuing contact with the other parent…”. Vermont statute continues “... except where contact will result in harm to the child or to a parent”.

This makes sense; certainly we can’t expect a battered mother to foster a positive relationship between her child and that child’s father. And, with the incredibly high overlap between batterers and child sexual abuse perpetrators, we can’t blame her for wanting to keep her children from unsupervised visits with Dad.

But remember how suave and convincing and articulate the batterer is. How does one prove that abuse has occurred when there is no evidence to bring to the judge – or when the accusations are vehemently denied by the father and his community and family network? Furthermore, the batterer is often effective at illustrating to the court that Mom is unfit, psychologically unhealthy, and negligent.

And, believe it or not, it works. Contrary to intuition, what often happens in this scenario is that Mom’s effort at protecting her child(ren) is misinterpreted as a hostile attempt to alienate the child from her/his father to gain an advantage over the custody dispute. This has popularly become known as Parent Alienation Syndrome or PAS. This so-called syndrome is only a theory - it has not been peer reviewed nor accepted as a psychological diagnosis, yet, it seems to be a powerful tool that batterers (and their attorneys) use remarkably well.

So, the question for me is, what do I do when someone I care about is walking into this nightmare? My strategy, I’ve decided, is to share the resources that I have, give the information and be supportive of the path taken. It feels like my responsibility, and certainly my desire, is greater than that. But having expertise doesn’t make the decisions any easier; it doesn’t change the statistics, and it doesn’t mean I am safe from its affects.

If you would like to learn more about this issue, please contact the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and ask for our child custody resource list. There are numerous publications and web resources specifically addressing this issue. We also have information on a national conference designed specifically for ‘protective parents’ who are fighting for custody, and supportive peer networks for Moms and young adults.

1 Fathers who batter their female partner are twice as likely to seek sole custody of their children than are nonviolent fathers. Fathers who fight for custody win sole or joint custody in 70% of the cases. Smith and Coukos, 1997
2 For an excellent summary of this issue see Lundy Bancroft’s paper Understanding The Batterer in Custody and Visitation Disputes at www.lundybancroft.com.
3 High conflict divorce is described as a conflict existing over long periods consisting of extreme distrust, strong feelings of threat from the other parent, frequent accusations of abuse/neglect, and use of physical threats or intimidation. The concept assumes equal power between a divorcing couple and therefore should not be applied to a relationship where one partner exerts considerable power and control over the other. The Early Identification and Streaming of Cases of High Conflict Separation and Divorce: A Review. 2004. Canada DOJ.
4 15VSA s.665
6 PAS is a theory developed by child psychologist Richard Gardner in 1985. It has been used to make sense of the many child sexual abuse accusations that are at issue during divorce proceedings. The idea is that Mom is alienating (or brainwashing) the child against her/his father so as to have an increased chance of gaining custody. The theory ignores the fact that children are more apt to concede sexual abuse to a trusted adult when they feel safe – for example when Dad is no longer in the house. See the summary Parental Alienation: Getting It Wrong in Child Custody Cases by Carol S. Brusch and posted on the ABA website at http://www.abanet.org/search/pages/searchResults.cfm?resultStart=1&searchArea=all&criteria=Parent+Alienation+Syndrome&collection=all
Vermont Network Member Programs

* = Shelter

**AWARE**
P.O. Box 307, Hardwick, VT 05843
Hotline: 802-472-6463

*Battered Women’s Services and Shelter*
P.O. Box 652, Barre, VT 05641
Hotline: 877-543-9498

*Clarina Howard Nichols Center (CHNC)*
P.O. Box 517, Morrisville, VT 05661
Hotline: 802-888-5256

**NEKCA Step O.N.E.**
P.O. Box 1004, Newport, VT 05855
Hotline: 800-224-7837

**New Beginnings**
12 Valley Street, Springfield, VT 05156
Hotline: 802-885-2050 or 802-674-6700

**Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE)**
P.O. Box 227, Bennington, VT 05201
Hotline: 802-442-2111

*Rutland County Women’s Network and Shelter (RCWNS)*
P.O. Box 313, Rutland, VT 05701
Hotline: 802-775-3232

**Safeline**
P.O. Box 446, Randolph, VT 05060
Hotline: 800-639-7233

**Sexual Assault Crisis Team (SACT)**
4 Cottage Street, Barre, VT 05641
Hotline: 802-479-5577

**Umbrella**
970 Memorial Drive, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Hotline: 802-748-8141 or 748-8645

*Voices Against Violence*
P.O. Box 72, Saint Albans, VT 05753
Hotline: 802-524-6575

*Women Helping Battered Women (WHBW)*
P.O. Box 1535, Burlington, VT 05402
Hotline: 802-658-1996

*Women’s Crisis Center*
P.O. Box 933, Brattleboro, VT 05302
Hotline: 802-254-6954 or 800-773-0689

*Women’s Information Service (WISE)*
79 Hanover Street, Lebanon, NH 03766
Hotline: 603-448-5525

Women’s Rape Crisis Center
P.O. Box 92, Burlington, VT 05402
Hotline: 802-863-1236 or 800-773-0689

WomenSafe
P.O. Box 67, Middlebury, VT 05753
Hotline: 802-388-4205 or 800-388-4205
TTY: 388-9181

Statewide Hotlines:
[will connect you with closest local Program]
1-800-228-7395 (Domestic Violence)
1-800-489-7273 (Sexual Assault)