

# The MILFORD DAILY NEWS

## Domestic violence reductions applauded

By Sara Withee / Daily News Staff  
Wednesday, October 12, 2005

**MILFORD** -- Police and advocates came together last night to observe gains in efforts to help domestic violence victims and the need to keep pushing forward.

The two dozen people had much to celebrate as they observed October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Fewer restraining orders are being sought locally and domestic violence crimes and murders across the state are down, officials said.

Debra Gabowitz, coordinator of domestic violence services for Wayside Trauma Intervention Services, credited Wayside's two advocates, Loriann Pallaria and Liliana Cosquete, with helping reduce Milford's numbers.

Fluent in Portuguese and Spanish, they are reaching victims outside the usual channels, Gabowitz said.

"That makes a world of difference," Gabowitz told the group assembled inside Wayside Youth and Family Support Network's Asylum Street building. "Not only do they meet more clients when they are working, often they will meet them in strange places, the Stop & Shop, the library."

Police Lt. James Falvey said Pallaria and Cosquete have made his department's officers more aware of the problem. He said the two advocates also follow up on their own and they pick up problems never detected in the past -- such as how children not directly involved in abuse are being impacted, he said.

"The girls who work with us know enough to delve a lot deeper," Falvey said.

Mendon Police Chief Ernest Horn said the message about reduced numbers of violent domestic crimes isn't to cut back on funding, but to continue it.

"If you fund something, you expect something to occur and when it does, that's not when you need to stop funding," he said.

Rosemarie Coelho, vice president of Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, said the drop in violent domestic assaults does not mean there has been an improvement in homelessness among the women and children.

"So our work is not over," she said.

Another new focus should be increasing awareness in the workplace and educating victims to observe all the ways domestic violence hurts them, officials said.

"Abuse takes a lot of different forms," said Chris Crean, an investigator with the state Department of Social Services in Whitinsville. "It doesn't have to be contact with another body."

Change is not possible without recognition, Gabowitz said.

"Domestic violence doesn't happen to someone else," she said. "It happens to us all. It happens to our community and we must respond accordingly."

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Sara Humiston, with the Family Network, reads the names of those killed by domestic violence in the last year. (John Thornton photo)

