

Gender fairness and domestic violence

by Marna Anderson

Just four years after the Gender Fairness Task Force was put into place by the Minnesota Supreme Court, WATCH was founded by concerned citizens to monitor Hennepin County Courts on cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Since 1993 when monitors first entered the courtrooms with signature red clipboards in hand, WATCH has seen many improvements in how cases of violence against women are handled. We have a ways to go, however, in achieving gender equity in the criminal justice system.

More than fifteen years ago, a WATCH monitor noted a Hennepin County judge asking a domestic abuse victim with obvious injuries what she had "done this time" to get into trouble with her husband.

A trial monitored by WATCH early on involved a 15 year-old girl who had been raped by her friend's father while at a sleepover. The defense argued that the young woman was responsible for the sexual contact because she was "sexually aroused" that day after reading an article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine about sex with older men.

Monitors rarely report such blatant victim-blaming comments and ridiculous "Cosmo defense" arguments now, but victim-blaming attitudes still rear their ugly head in court in more subtle ways. For instance, the first time I attended an order for protection

(OFP) hearing at the Hennepin County Family Justice Center, the presiding judge told me that many petitioners inappropriately use the hearing to begin divorce proceedings and avoid paying a \$250 filing fee. Another judge denied a request for an OFP stating that he believed the relationship was "full of jealousy and animosity" and the "drama was being played out" in a domestic violence court proceeding. The victim's petition claimed a strangulation assault.

Oddly enough, despite the obvious motivation batterers have for lying in court and the countless studies showing that abusive men tend to minimize or deny their violence, in both these cases, the *women* were suspected of lying about the violence.

Our court system is embedded in an ill-informed culture that still holds women responsible for domestic violence.

In the courts, these societal attitudes often play out in domestic violence trials, where defense attorneys use cultural myths to a defendant's advantage. In one such case WATCH monitored, the prosecutor called jurors afterwards to find out why they acquitted the defendant. More than one said they believed the woman exaggerated the assault because she "saw her meal ticket walking out the door" and wanted to get back at the defendant.

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What's new

Staff

WATCH warmly welcomes Kate Hovde, who joined us in August as the suburban court monitoring coordinator. Kate has a B.A. in sociology from the University of Kansas. Following her undergraduate studies, Kate completed a year with Americorps in Seattle, where she worked as a domestic violence advocate. Prior to moving to Minnesota, she returned to Lawrence, Kansas to work as the court outreach advocate for Women's Transitional Care Services providing legal advocacy to victims of domestic violence.

Congratulations to WATCH administrative/program assistant Nashad Muse and her husband, Farah, on the birth of their son, Mahad, born on October 5th! Nashad is on temporary leave through the end of the year.

And, a fond farewell and thanks to Anita Gopalaswamy, who served as our volunteer coordinator and community outreach coordinator. Anita's family moved to Thailand in September as a result of her husband's job transfer. We

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The messages about women making up charges of rape and violence are strongly rooted in our culture's milieu. I was reminded of this recently at a family reunion when one of my relatives asked me what percentage of women who go to shelters are actually victims of violence and of those who are, how many of them instigate the assaults.¹

These messages are also the everyday topic of television whether on drama, reality or talk shows. A recent episode of Dr. Phil was dedicated to the following question: *Why do women stay in abusive relationships?* People seem to be more comfortable asking this question than the one that we should be asking: *Why do so many men use physical violence in their relationships and what are we going to do about it?*

The criminal justice system cannot end domestic violence on its own, though it can and should lead the way in changing societal attitudes about domestic violence by apprehending, aggressively prosecuting and holding accountable domestic abusers while at the same time providing victims the resources they need to live free of fear and physical danger. We have the laws to do it. And many members of the criminal justice system across Minnesota have dedicated their careers to guaranteeing safety for battered women and seeking ways to prevent men from committing future assaults.

In the last twenty years, some jurisdictions have implemented specialized domestic violence courts or bench guides for handling domestic cases, many more judges, attorneys and probation officers receive specialized training in the dynamics of domestic violence, law enforcement and members of the justice system have stronger communication tools at their disposal and use them to assess the probability of abusers' increased violence. Conviction rates in domestic violence cases are higher than they were twenty years ago when many prosecutors routinely dismissed criminal charges due to a lack of "victim cooperation." (Though dismissals still occur for this reason with frequency, when the Task Force conducted their first study of domestic violence in the courts, prosecutors reported 80 to 90 percent dismissal rates. In contrast, some counties, including Hennepin, report nearly an 80 percent conviction rate on domestic cases.)

Recently, a WATCH monitor overheard two family members discussing the assault their brother had allegedly committed against their sister-in-law. One brother got hold of the criminal complaint in the hearing and said to the other, "Did you read this complaint? Did you read what he did to her? That's Karen* they're talking about. That's Karen he did that to." The complaint and the proceedings jolted

¹ Minnesota's battered women's shelters are typically filled to capacity. Advocates report having to locate beds for women and their children in other jurisdictions or neighboring states. It is estimated that approximately 2% of reported domestic assaults are false, the same percentage of false reporting on other crimes.

the brothers into understanding the level of violence their brother was capable of and the fear their sister-in-law was living with. It was not hidden away any longer. It was out in the open, on paper and being discussed in a courtroom. While our monitor waited in the hallway, she heard the men denounce their brother and express support for the victim.

This case illustrates how the decisions made by each member of the justice system ultimately led to the family members coming to terms with the realities of domestic violence.

There are many examples of how the justice system pushes our society ahead in understanding domestic violence, but there are also examples of how members of the justice system are influenced by dominant cultural norms that suggest women lie about abuse and stay in abusive relationships.

Those who make up the criminal justice system — law enforcement, prosecutors, correctional officers, advocates and judges — "make clear what we as a culture abhor and what we will tolerate" (Quindlen, Anna). When they respond swiftly and intently to all incidents of domestic violence, they send the message that, as representatives of the culture at large, they will not tolerate such violence.

* not real name of victim

What's new *Continued from page 1*

are sad to see her go, but happy she and her family have gotten their wish of being closer to family in India.

Board

WATCH is pleased to announce the addition in September of two new board members, Jennifer Johnson and Thompson Aderinkomi.

Jennifer was one of the first WATCH volunteers, starting as a court observer in 1993. At that time, she worked as a medical social worker at Hennepin County Medical Center, and she also served as a family/community liaison in the Minneapolis Public Schools. In addition to volunteering as a board member and court monitor with WATCH, Jennifer is a board member of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Foundation and active in the League of Women Voters of Minneapolis and American Association of University Women. She tutors in the Minneapolis Schools, delivers Meals on Wheels, and serves at Loaves and Fishes.

Thompson is enrolled in the MBA program with an emphasis on finance at the Carlson School of Management, a program he started after receiving a B.S. in economics and statistics and a M.S. in statistics from the University of Minnesota. He has volunteered extensively with the high-school-aged group for Grace EFC and had great success spearheading six successful fundraising/outreach events. His current volunteer work includes serving as a tutor for elementary-aged children at People Serving People, an emergency homeless shelter.

Case summaries

ANTHONY STEVEN HILL

Anthony Steven Hill, 45, was charged with felony first degree assault for pointing a loaded handgun at police officers and felony second degree assault for shooting his girlfriend. Previously, he was convicted of misdemeanor domestic assault against the same girlfriend in 2003. According to the criminal complaint, Hill and his girlfriend were at home with her three children, ages 6, 14, and 17. When she tried to stop Hill from whipping the six year old with a belt, he got a handgun from his truck and brought it into the house.

Hill then ordered the victim and her children to leave and shut himself in the bedroom. The victim tried to enter the bedroom to retrieve some clothes, but Hill pushed her out and fired a bullet that went through the door and struck her. Her 17-year-old son carried her into another bedroom, where they called police, while Hill yelled at all of them to get out of the house.

A jury convicted Hill of the first degree assault against the police officers and the second degree assault charge against his girlfriend was dismissed. Two of the three responding officers gave victim impact statements at the sentencing; one described his fear that Hill would end up killing everybody in the house, including the officers. Assault on a police officer carries a mandatory 10-year prison sentence, and Judge Robert Small sentenced Hill to 120 months in prison with credit for 14 days served. Darren Borg was the prosecutor, and Richard Swanson was the defense attorney.

JASON CHRISTOPHER SWEENEY, SR.

Jason Christopher Sweeney, Sr., 36, was charged with felony third degree criminal sexual conduct for assaulting the daughter of a family friend over a period of three years, beginning when she was 13. The victim told investigators that she lived with Sweeney during part of the time and that he had previously hit her and taken nude photographs of her. Three witnesses, including Sweeney's wife, told police they had known about the assaults for some time. Under questioning, Sweeney admitted to sexually assaulting the victim and taking nude photos of her and her younger sister.

Sweeney pleaded guilty before Judge Beryl Nord. At the sentencing hearing, the victim's stepfather gave an impact statement in which he begged the court to impose the maximum sentence. Speaking for his stepdaughter, he described how she felt hurt, victimized, and angry at Sweeney, who had been a trusted family friend. Judge Nord stayed imposition of the prison sentence, and placed Sweeney on probation for five years with extensive conditions, some of which include: serve 180 days in the workhouse, supply

a DNA sample, complete in-patient sex offender treatment, have no contact with the victim or her family, and register as a predatory offender. The prosecutor was Daniel Allard, and the defense attorney was David Desmidt.

SHAUN DAVID YOUNG

In the July 2008 issue of this newsletter, WATCH published a chronology of the domestic violence committed by serial offender Shaun David Young. That same month, WATCH learned that Young had been charged with two new felonies, domestic assault and domestic assault by strangulation, stemming from an assault against his latest girlfriend.

According to the criminal complaint, the victim stated that Young refused to leave her apartment and strangled her until she began "seeing stars," became light headed, and found it hard to breathe. When the victim's teenage daughter attempted to call 911, Young tried to strike her, but her mother was able to push Young out of the apartment. Young pleaded guilty to felony domestic assault by strangulation, and the domestic assault charge was dismissed.

In April 2009, Judge Nord sentenced Young to 16 months in prison with credit for 22 days served. Fredrick Halla was the prosecutor, and Michael Holland was the defense attorney.

WATCH monitored the corresponding child protection case that was opened as a result of the July incident. In that case, the victim was alleged to have placed her daughter's health and welfare at risk due to her daughter's presence in the room during Young's assault. In November 2008, Juvenile Court Judge Kerry Meyer ordered the victim to attend domestic abuse counseling. Upon documentation that the victim followed the court ordered case plan, the case was dismissed.

MORRIS GAYE KAYEE

Morris Gaye Kayee, 28, was charged with five separate felony cases between September 2008 and June 2009 for threatening his daughter with a knife, almost killing his girlfriend, and contacting his girlfriend from jail to threaten her and her family.

Case 1: Terroristic threats (felony) and endangerment of a child (gross misdemeanor)

9/21/08 Hennepin County criminal complaint: According to the complaint, Kayee's daughter, Victim A, was at home when Kayee became angry at her and threatened to kill her with a knife. Kayee's girlfriend, Victim B, was also present and persuaded him to let the girl go. **Kayee, who was on probation for domestic assault, was arrested at the scene.**

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Volunteer notes

- ✓ The judge in an order for protection hearing expressed concern that the allegations about to be discussed could be traumatic for the respondent's three-year-old daughter to hear. She worked with the mother to have the child wait in the hall with the clerk.
- ✓ During an order for protection hearing, the petitioner asked for the order to be dismissed. The judge suggested amending it to prohibit acts of violence, but to allow contact, emphasizing how all the acts alleged in the original petition were dangerous and against the law. She was very good at connecting with the petitioner and respectfully discussed the serious risk to the petitioner's safety, specifically addressing her pregnancy.
- ✓ When a defendant was brought up for his hearing, he asked for an interpreter. The deputy who brought him in commented, "He's lived in the U.S. for nine years, he should be able to speak English. If I lived in Mexico for nine years, I'd be able to speak Spanish."
- ✓ Family court was in chaos today. So many respondents and petitioners were present downstairs that the clerk brought up several respondents and petitioners for their hearings at the same time. The deputies in the courtroom were discussing the danger of this situation, saying the lack of order might mean that things could get out of hand and someone could "beat up their ex" out in the waiting room.
- ✓ The probation officers in domestic violence court today were looking at and audibly discussing a bridal website during the hearings. It was distracting, rude, and made it hard to hear.
- ✓ While I was waiting for a case to begin at the government center, the defense attorney and prosecutor were laughingly discussing the defendant's drug test results. When they went into chambers, the girlfriend of the defendant turned to me and said, "They just think it's funny, but they're toying with people's lives."
- ✓ Only one deputy was monitoring the metal detectors and security line going into the public safety facility today. I know budgets are tight, but watching the deputy try to keep track of all the people going in and out of the machine and watching as the bags were x-rayed did not give me much confidence in the safety of the building.
- ✓ During a hearing in felony arraignment court, in a discussion with the attorneys, the presiding judge seemed to be trying to remember the name of the judge that would be on the calendar for the defendant's next appearance. At one point during their discussion, the judge asked "who is the black judge?"
- ✓ While waiting for a hearing to start, the defense attorney started shooting questions at the victim in the gallery about why she picked up the phone when the defendant called her. The victim was getting upset by the questioning, so the prosecutor told him to stop because she wasn't a witness. The defense attorney got kind of angry and said, "Fine, then we'll just get you a subpoena." The victim became visibly upset by this. Earlier, she told the prosecutor that she did not want the *no contact* order lifted and was sure the defendant would try to contact her if he was released.
- ✓ The last few times I've monitored in felony arraignment court, the county attorney has requested *no contact* as a condition of release in all domestic violence and sexual assault cases. This seems like a very good practice that should result in a higher level of safety for victims.
- ✓ The prosecutor, judge, and defense attorney were all gossiping continually between cases in the government center today. They were talking about setting two people who worked in the building up on a date. The defense attorney referred to the government center as Hennepin High, which seems to sum it up to me.
- ✓ Why are hearings in domestic violence court scheduled for 8:30 a.m.? At that time, only the deputies are in the courtroom. Eventually people start arriving, but they inevitably have to wait for their hearings. By 10:05 a.m. today, the advocates, probation officers, and attorneys had arrived, but not the judge. The clerk made no announcement regarding the delay, most likely because this is just business as usual.
- ✓ The judge in domestic violence court released a defendant without bail. He took the time to explain that this was not to 'minimize' what happened and detailed the *no contact* order and *stay away* conditions of release. The judge also reiterated the importance of the defendant completing domestic violence classes and said it was 'crucial' for him to comply with all the conditions set by the court.
- ✓ A deputy in felony arraignment court was inconsistent in enforcing the rules. A little girl in the gallery was loudly running around and twirling in circles, yet the deputy said nothing to her parents. Meanwhile, the in-custody defendants were communicating with people in the gallery with no rebukes from the deputy. The deputy did, however, hush two men who were quietly whispering in the gallery!

Case summaries

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10/12/08 Plea hearing Case 1: Kayee pleaded guilty to terroristic threats, and Judge Allen Oleisky released him pending sentencing under the following conditions: no alcohol or drugs, *no contact* with Victim A, remain law abiding, and attend all court appearances.

Case 2: Domestic assault (felony) and interference with an emergency call (gross misdemeanor)

12/27/08 Hennepin County criminal complaint: Victim B reported to Brooklyn Center police that her boyfriend, Kayee, kicked her in the face, splitting it open by her eye. When she tried to call for help, Kayee grabbed the cordless phone from her and removed the batteries. She eventually got to another phone and called police, after which Kayee fled the scene. Kayee's one-month-old son with Victim B, and his 17-year-old niece, Victim C, were also in the home during the assault.

Case 3: Attempted first degree murder (felony) and second degree assault (felony)

12/30/08 Hennepin County criminal complaint: Brooklyn Center police officers responded to an emergency call and found Victim B unresponsive, badly beaten, and lying in a pool of blood with two broken knives near her. The victim was taken to the intensive care unit at North Memorial Hospital, where she was treated for head and abdominal injuries and placed on a respirator. Kayee's niece (Victim C) told police that Kayee had been pressuring Victim B to deny her story in Case 1. The argument continued into the night, culminating when Victim C saw Kayee push Victim B down, kick her in the neck, strangle her, and punch her. Kayee then retrieved a knife from the kitchen, and when Victim C tried to stop him, he pointed it at her and told her to get out of his way. As Victim C fled the apartment with her own child, she saw Kayee stabbing Victim B. Kayee was arrested and later admitted to cutting and hitting Victim B. Their one-month-old son was also injured when Kayee dropped him on his head when officers arrived.

1/5/09 First appearance Case 2: Judge Cara Neville ordered Kayee to have *no contact* with the victim(s), remain law abiding, and attend all court appearances.

4/29/09 Competency hearing Case 3: Judge Richard Scherer ordered Kayee to complete a competency evaluation.

Case 4: Two counts of violation of a no contact order (felony)

3/4/09 Hennepin County criminal complaint: Victim B reported to the Brooklyn Center Police Department that

she had received calls and letters from Kayee from the Hennepin County jail in violation of the *no contact* order. In the communications, Kayee would apologize, tell her he was glad she was alive, and urge her and her family not to appear in court.

5/28/09 Omnibus hearing Case 3: Kayee was found competent to stand trial.

6/08/09 Plea hearing Case 3: Kayee pleaded guilty to attempted first degree murder.

Case 5: Two counts of violation of a no contact order (felony)

6/1/09 Hennepin County criminal complaint: Victim B reported to the Brooklyn Center Police Department that Kayee continued to call and write her from the Hennepin County jail in violation of the *no contact* order, stating in one letter that, "only death can [keep me] apart from you."

7/7/09 Outcome Cases 1, 2, 3, and 4: Kayee pleaded guilty to terroristic threats in Case 1 and attempted first degree murder in Case 3. The other charges in these cases were dismissed, as were all the charges in Cases 2 and 4.

Three victim impact statements were given at Kayee's sentencing for Cases 1 and 3. The first, read by Assistant Hennepin County Attorney Elizabeth Cutter for Victim B, described Victim B's suffering from extensive injuries, including a brain injury. Victim B relayed her inability to trust anyone and her distress that Kayee continues to contact her in spite of the *no contact* order.

Victim C read her own victim impact statement, asking the court to give Kayee a lengthy jail sentence. The last victim impact statement, given by Victim B's mother, described how her relationships with her daughter and granddaughter have been permanently changed and how she must now act as the mother to both of them.

Judge Richard Scherer sentenced Kayee to two concurrent terms in prison: 15 months in prison with credit for 215 days served for Case 1 and 180 months in prison with credit for 190 days served for Case 3. Conditions included: comply with the existing *no contact* order, supply a DNA sample, and pay restitution. Elizabeth Cutter was the prosecutor, and Jeanette Boerner was the defense attorney.

10/9/09 Outcome Case 5: Case 5 was dismissed on motion of the prosecutor.

Familicide

Familicide is a term that refers to cases where a man murders his entire family and then commits suicide. Since October 2008, this crime has spiked, a development some have linked to the economic downturn. While the jury is still out on whether the shaky economy has influenced familicide, the National Institute of Justice for the first time convened a panel of experts in June 2009, to discuss their research findings and possible ways to prevent future familicides from occurring. The panelists were Dr. David Adams, author of *Why Do They Kill? Men Who Murder Their Intimate Partners*; Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell, Anna D. Wolf Chair and Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing; and Dr. Richard Gelles, Professor and Dean, School of Public Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania.

Risk Factors

The experts agreed that, because familicide is rare, finding trends is difficult. Dr. Campbell's 12-city study showed the biggest risk factor for familicide, present in 70 percent of cases, to be a prior history of domestic violence. While the perpetrators did not always fit the profile associated with abusers or have criminal records, in most instances, conflicts had built up and a precipitating event—frequently when the woman announced she was leaving—was met with murderous violence. In other instances, threats of violence had become more frequent and more specific over time until the perpetrator acted on his threats.

The panelists agreed that access to a gun is another major risk factor in familicide. According to Dr. Adams, 92 percent of 591 murder-suicide cases examined in one study were committed with a gun. Furthermore, states with

the least restrictive gun control laws have as much as eight times the rate of murder-suicides as those with the most restrictive gun control laws.

Prevention Strategies

Eighty-three percent of the victims and perpetrators in murder-suicides were known by some agency prior to that crime. The panel thought that greater collaboration between police and social welfare agencies, such as those focused on child welfare, suicide prevention, or substance abuse treatment, could reduce the frequency of familicides. Equally important from its perspective is to build a sense of bystander responsibility and increase community accountability so that information on where and how women can obtain assistance in dealing with an abusive partner is easily available. Social welfare and police agencies in contact with domestic violence victims should be well aware of the increased danger to victims leaving abusive partners, including the possibility of familicide, and educate them about the risk and safety measures to better protect themselves and their families.

As budgets tighten, funding for social services may decrease, making specialized domestic violence services harder to find. Since the need for expertise in the area of domestic violence will still remain, it will become more critical that police and other community-based helping agencies are well informed and their efforts well coordinated.

This article was excerpted and adapted from one written by Esteban Hernandez, publications manager, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), and posted at corrections.com.

Thumbs up/thumbs down

👍 Thumbs up to Andrew Schmidt, Chief of Police for the Lower Sioux Indian Community in south-central Minnesota, for his role in bringing pimps to justice and helping girls escape sexual trafficking. A former sergeant with the Minneapolis Police Department, Chief Schmidt was one of 12 law enforcement officers recently honored by Children of the Night, a shelter program in California for girls escaping prostitution. The girls chose officers they believe “best symbolize their escape from sexual exploitation.” In addition to assisting the girls, Chief Schmidt played a pivotal role in the prosecution of 18 members of a family of pimps—12 of whom pled guilty and six of whom were found guilty at trial and sentenced to prison for terms ranging from 17 to 85 years.

👍 Thumbs up to the United States Senate for passing an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill aimed at

stopping defense companies hired by the U.S. government from requiring victims of workplace sexual assault, discrimination, and battery to agree to binding arbitration instead of having their cases heard in court. The amendment, introduced by Minnesota Senator Al Franken, passed by a vote of 68 to 30 (with two members not voting). Ten Republican senators, including all the female GOP senators, joined Democrats in supporting the amendment. “I can’t see in any circumstance that a woman who was a victim of sexual assault shouldn’t have her right to go to court,” Republican Sen. George LeMieux of Florida said, “So that is why I voted for it.”

The bill must still be heard in conference committee, where the House and Senate versions of the bill will be discussed and the bill finalized, but we applaud this important step towards assuring that women’s legal rights are protected.

Remembering Dr. Katherine Luke

The purple ribbons commemorating domestic violence awareness month take on added significance this month as WATCH mourns the loss of former research coordinator Katherine Luke to breast cancer. Katherine was an esteemed member of the WATCH staff from July 2001 to August 2003, whose work was informed by her passion for social justice for women and children. Her keen research skills and critical thinking were put to good use as she conducted research and drafted analytical reports on the criminal justice system's response to cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect, and her leadership abilities shone when she mentored and served as a role model to her research interns.

While Katherine's professional life developed in positive ways while she was at WATCH, so, too, did her personal life. WATCH celebrated with her as she announced her engagement to Michael Pryplesh, a valued WATCH volunteer, and her acceptance to the University of Michigan's joint program in social work and sociology in Ann Arbor.

So began a new chapter in Katherine's life. In the intervening years, Katherine and Mike became the parents of two children, Nicholas and Alexandra, and Katherine was awarded a doctorate in August of this year. When Katherine was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer in early September, what should have been the triumphant next chapter in her life was unexpectedly cut short. The world is a dimmer place without Katherine's brilliant smile, personality, and intellect, and the tragedy of her death is magnified knowing that her and her children's time together was all too brief.

WATCH extends its deepest condolences to all of Katherine's family. A memorial service in Minnesota will be held next year at a date to be announced via the web-based community for the family at www.lotsahelpinghands.com/c/617505/login/. Those interested in contributing to the educational fund established for Katherine's children should write a check to American Funds with "The Katherine Luke Education Fund" in the memo line and send it to RBC Wealth Management, The Hillard Group, P.O. Box 8479, Rapid City, SD 57709.

Remembering Referee Judy Mack

WATCH notes with sadness the death in October of Judy Mack, who served as a Hennepin County Family Court Referee from 1992-2007. Throughout her career, Referee Mack advocated for children of divorce and women suffering from domestic abuse. A memorial service was held on October 21 at Temple Israel in Minneapolis.

Volunteers needed for suburban courts

Since our inception, WATCH has been contacted by probation officers, city attorneys and advocates regarding the handling of domestic violence cases in Hennepin County's three suburban courts—Southdale, Ridgedale, and Brookdale. Their concerns suggest that domestic violence cases heard at the suburban courts are handled differently from those at the Government Center downtown. As a result, questions have been raised as to whether the needs of victims of domestic violence and their children are being adequately served in the suburban courts. With the help of a state-funded grant, WATCH launched the Suburban Court Project in August.

Over the next 21 months, WATCH monitors will gather data on courtroom decorum, timeliness of hearings, demeanor and behavior of courtroom personnel, and case outcomes in the suburban courts. In addition to regularly having volunteers in each court, we will prioritize some cases to track from initial charge to disposition. At the conclusion of the project, we will issue a report and recommendations for improvement.

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering in one of Hennepin County's three suburban courts, please contact Kate Hovde, Suburban Court Project Coordinator via phone at 612-341-2747 ext. 2 or email at khovde@watchmn.org.

Become a WATCH volunteer

- ✓ Looking for experience in the courtroom?
- ✓ Passionate about eliminating violence against women and children?
- ✓ Want to promote victim safety and offender accountability?
- ✓ Interested in learning more about the justice system?

Join WATCH's volunteer program as a court monitor!

We are looking for dedicated individuals to take note of how hearings are handled as well as their outcomes. We use this information to recommend improvements to the justice system and to promote greater safety for victims of violence.

The next training is February 6th. Contact Anna at 612-341-2747 x7 or alight@watchmn.org for more information. Visit our website, www.watchmn.org, to download a volunteer application.

WATCH

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DONATE ONLINE ON NOV 17 AND DOUBLE YOUR GIFT TO WATCH

GiveMN.org is a website created to help nonprofits efficiently reach individual donors. Research shows that *for every 1% of Minnesota individual giving that is done on-line, the nonprofit sector will save more than \$10 million in fundraising expenses.*

GiveMN partners include 13 community foundations, including the Minneapolis and St. Paul Foundations. To launch the website and encourage people to make the shift from writing checks to giving online, November 17 has been designated ***Give to the Max Day***. On that day, GiveMN participating foundations will match individual contributions between \$10 and \$2,500 until \$1 million has been raised that day.

**By making your year-end gift to
WATCH online on Nov 17
at www.givemn.org,
you will double your impact
by doubling your gift.**

National summit to end domestic violence

On November 8-10 WATCH travels to Louisville, Kentucky to give a presentation about our court monitoring work at the National Summit to End Domestic Violence sponsored by the Mary Byron Foundation. The purpose of the summit is to showcase innovative approaches to domestic violence and the Foundation is gathering 23 programs from across the country for a two-day symposium to encourage the adoption of new strategies. WATCH received the Byron Foundation's Celebrating Solutions award in 2007.