



# DV NEWS

*A Newsletter of the Domestic Violence Program  
of  
Catholic Charities  
of Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie Counties*

**Spring 2017**

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

In January of 2017 Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie Counties was awarded funding to strengthen our existing domestic violence legal advocacy program. We will now be able to have more coverage for legal cases, with four advocates being trained and equipped to work with court issues. This newsletter is also made possible through that grant funding. Look for the newsletter on a quarterly basis. We hope to provide useful and interesting information. In addition to a strengthened staff and the newsletter, we will also be providing all clients that are eligible for legal services with

packets of information about law enforcement, courts, court processes, etc. All of this is made possible through VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) funding. As always, we state that domestic abuse does not discriminate and neither does Catholic Charities. We will provide shelter and appropriate services for all victims of domestic violence regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, military status, sex, marital status, or disability. We can provide services, including emergency shelter to unaccompanied minors as young as 16 years of age.



*Domestic Violence and Crime Victim Program Staff, l to r, Sarah Hilgers (DV and Crime Victim Advocate), Sue Palmer (DV Advocate), Angie Smith (DV and Crime Victim Program Director), Karis Ahrens (SUNY Cobleskill Intern), Randy Rathka (DV and Crime Victim Advocate), Meg Cooke (DV and Crime Victim Advocate).*

## NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 2-8, 2017. This year's theme - **Strength. Resilience. Justice.** - reflects a vision for the future in which all victims are strengthened by the response they receive, organizations are resilient in response to challenges, and communities are able to seek collective justice and healing. Catholic Charities offers a crime victim program for all victims of crime within

Schoharie County. Crimes that would be covered include:

- DWI / DUI
- Assault
- Harassment
- Menacing
- Sexual Assault / Rape
- Domestic Violence
- Unlawful Imprisonment
- Stalking
- Theft
- Burglary
- And more

Call Catholic Charities at (518) 234-3581 for more information, or have the client call directly to set up an appointment. An advocate will explain the program and assist them with completing an application through the New York State Office of Victim Services.

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

KARIS AHRENS, STUDENT INTERN OF SUNY COBLESKILL, FOR CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF DOS

February was Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM). TDV is abuse in any form caused by one person in an intimate relationship. Teen Dating Violence occurs in young adults ages 13-19. The purpose of this awareness campaign is to bring attention to who have suffered, as well as educate others on the seriousness of Teen Dating Violence.

Violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18. It is estimated that 1 in 3 adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. Also, 1 in

10 high school students have been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. Many people that are abused as adults admit that their first episodes of abuse were experienced during their teen years. Lastly, 81% of parents believe that Teen Dating Violence is not an issue, or are unsure if it's an issue, an extremely high percentage.

The website **Love Is Respect** offers a variety of information on the topic. It can be accessed at

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org). Teens can call and get information anonymously. Or, if they would prefer to not talk they can text or chat through instant messages with someone from the site.

People as young as 16 years old (male and female) may qualify for emergency shelter and other appropriate services. The number to call for assistance is

**518-234-2231.**



# MY EXPERIENCE WITH LEGAL ADVOCACY

MEG COOKE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIME VICTIM ADVOCATE

A mother of two boys came into our shelter. She had been physically assaulted and was deathly afraid for herself and her boys. She had never been away from home, never had a job, and did not graduate from high school. At the time, as the Legal Advocate, I accompanied this victim to criminal court, family court, and eventually to Schoharie County's Integrated Domestic Violence Court. I assisted her to file all of the necessary petitions. After obtaining her order of protection and being awarded custody of the boys she became more confident and independent. At the end of our work with this victim she had

secured employment, her boys were attending school, and they all lived in their own violence free apartment.

Legal Advocacy can be a crucial part of a client's ability to navigate their way through the law-enforcement and legal communities. People experiencing domestic violence are in crisis. Most of them are surviving and reacting to physical, emotional, and psychological trauma. Some of them are also responsible for children. With the pressure of dealing with all of these situations a legal advocate can be a calming reassuring support.

Legal Advocacy includes many services like accompanying a victim to court to assist in filing the appropriate petitions, or accompanying them to court for a hearing to be of support to them. Legal advocacy also includes help in documenting the facts, as well as communicating that information from clerk to lawyers to judge, whenever and wherever appropriate. Legal advocacy also provides information and education about available resources and programs to victims of domestic violence that they may not be aware of.

# THE NEW YORK STATE ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM (ACP)

ANGIE SMITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIME VICTIM PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Many people who are the victims/survivors of domestic violence have a lot of fear about writing their address on any official documents. Having just gotten free from violence and oppression they do not want their abuser to know where they live or how to contact them. New York State has a program just for these types of situations. The Department of State administers the Address Confidentiality Program for New York State residents.

The program is cost-free for women and men who are or have

been the victim of domestic violence (including household members such as children, parents, siblings) and have moved, or are planning on moving. The program allows them to shield their actual address. Participants apply for participation in the program, and are then given a substitute address, which they use for receiving first class, registered, and certified mail. No packages can be received other than pharmacy or mailings from a government agency. The Secretary of State "accepts service of process" on behalf of the participant. The mail is then

re-packaged and forwarded to their actual or mailing address.

Currently, this program is being underutilized in Schoharie County. Help spread the word about this valuable program. All of the advocates of the Schoharie County Domestic Violence Program have been trained in how to assist people with completing and submitting their application for this program. Contact any staff member for assistance.

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## UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

During this quarter we have learned that our long-time victim advocate, Meg Cooke, will be making a life changing transition and moving to Colorado. Meg has a combined total of 15 years as a Catholic Charities employee. She has been a Domestic Violence and Crime Victim Program Advocate, serving as legal advocate for 10 years. Meg was the first advocate to participate in IDV (Integrated Domestic Violence Court) from its inception in Schoharie County. Over the years Meg has provided

unwavering support for the clients that she has served. Meg is a mother of 5 children, and all of the children in the domestic violence safe dwelling feel connected to Meg. There is no way of measuring how many tears she has wiped, how many hugs she has given, or how many hours of service she has spent listening, advocating, and connecting people with resources. The clients know that Meg is there for them and will do what she can to help them. Because of her background as an EMT she is calm, cool, and collected when medical crises arise in the shelter, and she knows how to take charge of the situation. Throughout the community when people think of domestic violence they think of Meg Cooke. She has spent years developing relationships with court personnel, attorneys, and other agencies, and has never missed the opportunity to bring awareness, even in general conversation, to the

plight of the domestic violence victim/survivor. Long before there was a Thrift Shop at Catholic Charities Meg would drive her truck with Michelle, another advocate, to pick up furniture to distribute to people who were starting over with nothing. They were fondly referred to as "M&M Movers". She played a big part in establishing the Thrift Shop, which thrives today at Catholic Charities. Over the years her creative gifts have enabled her to make display tables, gifts, raffle items, and give-aways for many awareness activities. She has always added an artistic flair to all of the program's awareness activities, truly being able to 'make something out of nothing'. Meg has been a loyal Catholic Charities employee and has faithfully served her clients through challenging times. We will all miss Meg and all that she has contributed. She will be leaving Catholic Charities April 30. If you see her, wish her well!





### Domestic Violence Program

489 West Main Street  
Cobleskill, NY 12043

Phone: 518-234-3581  
Fax: 518-234-8423

**24 Hour Crisis Hotline:**  
**(518) 234-2231**  
**Collect Calls Accepted**

[www.CharitiesCCDO.org](http://www.CharitiesCCDO.org)

[www.facebook.com/  
CatholicCharitiesDOS](http://www.facebook.com/CatholicCharitiesDOS)

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## TIPS ON PROVIDING A TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE

RANDY RATHKA, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIME VICTIM ADVOCATE

Domestic violence, abuse, and trauma can significantly impact a person's overall health and well-being. It can affect how a person feels, thinks, and interacts with the world. The mental health effects of trauma may be long-lasting or may even develop into a disability, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sometimes, trauma-related symptoms improve with increased safety and support.

In the short term after a traumatic experience victims may seem distracted, disoriented or even disinterested. Because of these effects on survivors it may be difficult for them to engage in services or even relay what has happened to them.

Here's a few tips to keep in mind when interacting with abuse survivors:

- Keep in mind how this person may feel at this time, offer calming words and remain calm yourself.
  - Reduce excess stimulation, simplify choices, explain clearly and be willing to repeat yourself.
  - Break down plans into small steps, when possible have a flexible schedule and offer breaks when needed.
  - Offer realistic options and only promise what you can deliver. Try to think of how you would feel in a similar situation.
  - Be patient and empathetic.
  - If we can incorporate some of these tips into our interactions with abuse survivors we may be able to help them engage in services needed, and hopefully start a new positive chapter in their lives.
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