

No easy task starting Victims of Crime Services

By Sarah Frank

Victims of Crime Services

I spoke to an Elder recently who shared her story of domestic violence and remembered how there were no programs for women who were abused. Not only was there no safe place to go, but community members, family and law enforcement believed it was a personal family problem and chose to turn the other cheek.

I called and spoke to Ortbelia Patt, who was one of Warm Springs' first advocates for victims of domestic violence. This is her story:

It started by battered and abused women coming to my home for a safe haven in Miller Heights. I had to stand my ground while being confronted by their spouses or significant others demanding that they wanted the victim to come out of my home. When I chose not to follow their orders I was verbally abused and received threats of physical abuse.

I did this on my own because there was no safe place for the victims. I called the police and asked law enforcement what was available for the victims. At that time, the law enforcement had the attitude that this was a personal matter and did or could not offer much more. I volunteered to take the victims to the police department to take pictures of their cuts and bruises. Many times after the victim filed a complaint there seemed to be too much fear and intimidation from the victimizer that the victim would drop the charges.

After the fifth incident I got an appointment with Bob Jackson, Tribal Social Services director, and inquired if it was possible to find safe havens for victims of abuse. He called me a month later and asked if I would be interested in attending a conference for abuse. He asked who would be interested in advocating for such a program on the reservation. I selected Jewell Minnick.

When we returned we liter-

ally knocked on doors to be invited on to business agendas to share the conference information. We finally succeeded to get on Tribal Council's agenda, and some had the victims give testimony on their personal experience with the law enforcement and tribal court.

Once we got the attention of Tribal Council our goal was to acquire mandatory arrest of the victimizer, and removal from the household. We eventually received support from Tribal Council to have mandatory domestic training for our judicial system and for the law enforcement.

The main reason for this training was to assist the judicial and law enforcement agencies' attitude toward domestic violence. We had our first meeting with approximately 60 victims in the basement of the old clinic (now the Family Resource Center).

The women present seemed to feel empowered and voted to appoint a board of directors to oversee the Victims of Abuse activities. We were able to seek enough funding sources to allow staff to establish and implement what is known today as the Victims of Crime facilities.

I had to maintain my current employment in Purchasing, and Shirley Sanders and Jewell attended other conferences. Bob Jackson needs to be publicly thanked for assisting in implementing the Victims of Crime Program. Our thanks to Jim Soules, because he established the mandatory arrest in Prineville for domestic violence. He was always available to discuss issues and concerns. It took a lot of personal time, patience and persistence, but we were determined to overcome all the roadblocks and hurdles because we believed in helping the victims. We strongly felt this would help end the cycle of continued victimization in future generations.

A challenge to leave

Domestic violence continues to be a major problem in the Warm Springs community. Getting and staying out of an abusive relationship can be very challenging.

A woman who has been abused has many barriers to overcome. Barriers can include, but are not limited to a lack of financial support, housing, transportation, emotional stability, support to keep children, job skills, and education. Among these barriers, often the most overlooked, is emotional stability. A woman who is constantly criticized and/or belittled by her mate can become very fragile emotionally. It will take time for her to heal and become strong.

Why do women return?

For the most part, they love the abuser. The bond between the abuser and abused can be very strong. Some women and men build their whole being on their relationship and their family. If domestic violence was a part of their parent's life then the children learn the behavior and begin to see it as "just a way of life."

The national average number of times a woman will return to an abusive relationship is seven times; in Indian Country the average is 12 times.

See HEALING on page 10

Free! – Fall Clean Up Week!

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Events calendar

Project Graduation Can and Bottle Drive: Saturday, Oct. 29 from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. at Erickson's Sentry Market parking lot. Proceeds help fund the senior all-night drug and alcohol free party for the graduating class of 2006. Call for can and bottle pick-up. Monroe, 475-3555 or 977-2697 (cell); or Kirk, 475-9209 or 420-4260 (cell).

Mylo Jones Thanksgiving Basketball Tournament: Nov. 25-27. Mens 6 foot and under plus one. You can have two big guys – only one on the court at a time. Toppenish, Wash. tribal school, Stanley Smartlowit Gym. \$275 entry fee. \$75 deposit will hold spot. First 12 teams, eight-man roster. First place: leather sleeve jackets. Second, awards. Third, awards. All stars and MVP awards. For more information contact Glen or Mildred Jones, (509) 901-2372 or (509) 901-2373; or at work, (509) 865-5121, ext. 4295.

Credit announcement

The Tribal Credit Department is not accepting personal loan applications until Monday, Oct. 31.

The announcement is due to the current backlog of applications at Credit.

Only exceptions: Funeral loans, medical emergency, home loans, business loans.

Applications can be turned in on Oct. 31. Thank you.

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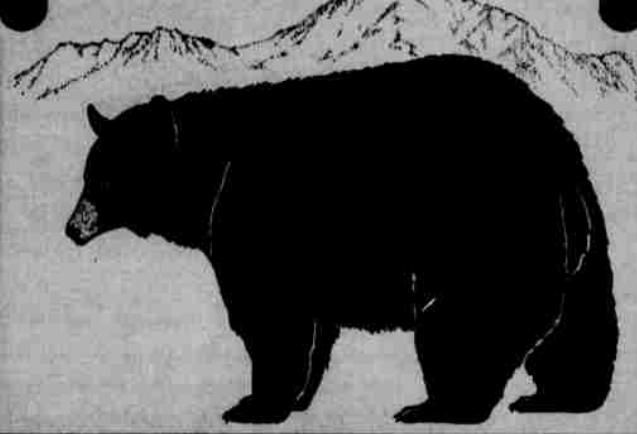
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