

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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2006: A Year of Unity for MCBW

Director's Update

Cyndi Cook, Executive Director

As we come to the end of another year of working together to end violence against women, we wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the highlights of 2006 for the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. As members and allies of the Coalition, you have made it possible for 2006 to be a year of tremendous unity, growth, and accomplishment for MCBW, and we want to make use of this newsletter to celebrate some of the best of the past year.

The year 2006 included a great deal of change for MCBW as we embarked on a plan to expand our program areas and staff positions to better promote justice, provide safety, and prevent future harm for all battered women and their children. MCBW's expansion was generously funded by the Bush Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, the Grotto Foundation, and the Otto Bremer Foundation. As part of our expansion plan, we added 6 new staff positions and welcomed Loreline Arevalos, Jeanne Barkey, Dorian Eder, Carla Ferrucci, Deb Foster, Tammie Larsen, and Liz Richards to the Coalition.

Included in the year's highlights is October's Statewide Conference, where 200 advocates, survivors, and allies gathered at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge in Deerwood, MN, to work to forge alliances and expand our base to end domestic violence. More information about this exciting event can be found later in this newsletter.

MCBW has also embarked on a new fundraising initiative to continue to have the capacity to provide the services our member programs need; ensure programs are heard, supported, and advocated for; and secure funds that will directly support the work of MCBW member programs. In May MCBW held a fundraising dinner with Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota that featured Victor Rivers, actor and spokesperson for the National Network to End Domestic Violence. There is also more information about this event and the fundraising initiative in articles later in the newsletter.

Unfortunately, 2006 has also brought some farewells, as two long-term staff members, Lonna Stevens and Naly Yang, moved on to new endeavors. We wish them well and know that they continue to work toward ending violence against women and children in their current positions.

Please look to this newsletter as a celebration of some of the best of 2006 and know that the work you all do every day, whether as an MCBW member program or an ally of battered women, makes an essential difference in the lives of women, children, and men across the state. Thank you for all that you do. We look forward to continuing this important work together in 2007.

Welcome to New MCBW Board Members

The Coalition is pleased to welcome Connie Moore, Ana Marie Studer, and La Yair Williams to the MCBW Board of Directors. These three dedicated women were elected to the Board at the 2006 Annual Membership Meeting held in October.

MCBW's current Board of Directors is composed of a diverse group of people that includes survivors, Native Women, women of color, Latina women, and also representation from greater Minnesota, Metro, elder, and LGBT communities. The three new board members will add to the rich diversity of skills and experiences represented on the Board and we look forward to their contributions throughout their terms.

In addition to the three new board members, the membership also re-elected Lenore Barsness, Robin Dietz-Mayfield, Shawn MacRae, Marilyn Rossman, and Leticia Sanchez to another term on the Board. We are grateful that they have agreed to work on the Board of Directors for an additional term and to continue the excellent work done by the Board on an ongoing basis.

The following is some information about the three new Board members. As you can see, the Coalition is extremely lucky to have such amazing women to help provide leadership and vision for MCBW in years to come.

Connie Moore is the executive director of Alexandra House in Blaine. She has worked in the movement for 23 years, beginning as a volunteer at Sojourner Shelter. Connie has worked at various organizations in the Twin Cities area including Cornerstone Advocacy Services, Home Free, and the Domestic Abuse Project. Her positions have included: women's shelter advocate, community advocate, legal advocate, CJI coordinator, and community program director. She also served as executive director at Project SOAR, a displaced homemaker program in Duluth. Throughout her career she has been a member of several county, state, and national initiatives where she provided leadership in creating public policies that address the needs of victims of domestic violence, displaced homemakers, and low

income families. She brings extensive experience in program administration (finance, fund development, human resources, etc.) as well as a passion to continue to build a strong state coalition that is capable of bringing all of our voices together to better speak to the needs of battered women and their families.

Ana Marie Studer is a women's advocate at Anna Marie's Alliance in St. Cloud. Through her work as a physician in Caracas, Venezuela, Ana found that she could only take care of the physical wounds of the battered women she encountered and had to let go of the rest as there were no resources available. In 2003 she started working as a volunteer with Anna Marie's Alliance to find answers to her questions about domestic violence. She is now able to work toward solutions. Her experience of domestic violence in two different countries gives her a perspective from two cultures and she has developed expertise in immigration issues faced by battered women and their children. She brings a holistic vision to her work and will use her tenure on the Board to help raise greater awareness about the issues in Minnesota.

La Yair Williams was born and raised in Chicago, IL, but has made southeast Minnesota her home for the last four years or so. La Yair describes herself as friendly, hard working, open-minded, and willing to learn. She is a devoted mother to her two daughters who are still living at home and is close to her two older sons. La Yair is a spiritual woman who loves music, skating, and walking. As a survivor of domestic violence, La Yair is committed to helping others. She is a graduate of the Houston County Women's Resources' June Kjome Place Transitional Housing Program, a founding member of the local Women of Color Group, and an active volunteer advocate for Houston County Women's Resources. She is compassionate, with a big heart to help others. La Yair works full time as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Caledonia Care and Rehabilitation Center, with a future goal of getting her nursing degree.

2006 MCBW Board of Directors

Executive Committee:

Chair: Lenore Barsness
Northwoods Coalition for Battered Women, Bemidji

Vice-Chair: Melissa Gomez
St. Paul Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, St. Paul

Secretary: Robin Dietz-Mayfield
Attorney, St. Paul

Treasurer: Marilyn Rossman
Grand Rapids

Members:

Vednita Carter
Breaking Free, St. Paul

Diane Kittelson
Someplace Safe, Glenwood

Sharonna Lee
Battered Women's Justice Project, Minneapolis

Shawn MacRae
Crime Services Inc., New Ulm

Vickie McCollum
Women's Network of the Red River Valley, Moorhead

Wylma Minkkinen
American Indian Community Housing Organization, Duluth

Linda Riddle
Houston County Women's Resources, Hokah

Rita Ruiz
Centro Legal, St. Paul

Leticia Sanchez
Migrant Health Service, Crookston

Julie Tilley
Praxis International, St. Paul

Ex-Officio Member:

Denise Gamache
Battered Women's Justice Project, Minneapolis

Members Consider Core Values and Priorities at MCBW's 2006 Annual Membership Meeting

The MCBW 2006 Annual Membership Meeting was held on October 24, 2006 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge in Deerwood, MN. It was an excellent opportunity for members from around the state to come together, get updated on the Coalition, elect new board members, and provide guidance for the coming year.

One of the key components of this year's Annual Meeting was a discussion around the Coalition's core values. The Board of Directors Membership Committee reported on its efforts to revisit MCBW's mission statement with the goal of establishing guidelines that would outline the philosophical underpinnings of the Coalition's work. With these guidelines, new applicants for membership would be fully informed about what the organization they are joining stands for and existing members would have a clear set of values to unite around as a coalition. Carol Arthur of the Domestic Abuse Project in Minneapolis said after the meeting, "It was also wonderful to be able to have a discussion on a philosophical level as we reviewed the current draft of MCBW's Mission and Core Values. These discussions together begin to unite us as a coalition with a common mission and values."

The Membership Committee reported that it researched the core values statements of other state coalitions and presented a draft core values statement to the Board and staff. The draft was then presented to the membership for discussion. With the feedback received at the Annual

Meeting, the Membership Committee will edit the draft and present it to the membership for final review in the coming weeks. The Committee anticipates that the draft will be formally adopted by the Board of Directors soon after receiving final feedback from the membership.

In addition to the core values discussion, members at the Annual Membership Meeting also had the opportunity to examine public policy and state funding issues and to provide feedback on priorities for the coming legislative session. After a presentation by MCBW lobbyist Joel Carlson on the current legislative picture and upcoming elections, Carla Ferrucci, director of public policy and systems change, reviewed the results of the recent legislative survey completed by members. Meeting participants then discussed funding priorities under best and worst case scenarios for the upcoming legislative session. Among the ideas listed by members as priorities were increased funding for community advocacy programs, services for women used in prostitution, Guardian ad Litem training, health care, cost of living increases, and staffing for all programs.

Participants in the Annual Meeting also discussed Guardians ad Litem and their increased use in Order for Protection hearings. Members gave feedback about whether this is happening in their jurisdictions and if so, whether it has been a problem for battered women and their children.

Save the Date for 2007 Violence Against Women Action Day!

*Co-Sponsored by the MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault,
the MN Coalition for Battered Women,
the MN Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition
and the MN Network on Abuse in Later Life*

Tuesday, February 27, 2007: Legislative Training, 4-8 p.m.

Wednesday, February 28, 2007: Rally at the Capitol, Noon

More details and registration coming SOON!

If you have questions, please call Carla at (651) 646-6177, ext. 27.

Forging Alliances, Expanding Our Base: The 2006 MCBW Statewide Conference

“The conference was valuable because we were able to receive excellent training, network, and truly see, feel, and recommit ourselves to the movement and our collective efforts to end violence against women and children.”

Rosanne St. Sauver, Houston County Women’s Resources, Hokah

We gathered in the north woods of Deerwood, Minnesota, at Ruttger’s Bay Lake Lodge on October 25-26, 2006 for the MCBW Statewide Conference. Advocates, survivors, board members, and volunteers from battered women’s programs from every corner of the state came together around our theme—*Forging Alliances and Expanding Our Base: Promoting Justice, Providing Safety, and Preparing for the Future for All Battered Women and Their Children.*



Conference participants check in.

The conference opened on Tuesday night when Terri Hawthorne and Kathleen Laughlin presented a special preview of *We Will Harbor You*, a documentary on the founding of Minnesota’s battered women’s movement. The documentary highlights an amazing group of Minnesota women whose actions and leadership more than 30 years ago helped start the worldwide battered women’s movement.

The MCBW Statewide Conference convened on Wednesday morning with keynote speaker Lydia Walker. Lydia is a nationally renowned trainer, speaker, and author on ending battering. Her keynote speech addressed the ongoing debate related to battered women’s programs moving from a social change framework to a social services approach. She stressed the need for the battered women’s movement to remain survivor-centered and offer battered women the freedom to make the decisions that are best for themselves and their children.

Wednesday was a full day of workshops that offered



Creating a painting as team building in Mali Kouanchao’s art workshop.

participants a wide range of options from partnering with faith communities, to providing services to older battered women, to affordable housing solutions, to working with prostituted women. “My favorite part of the conference was the workshop on prostitution because the presenters were dynamic, they were experts, and most importantly, they engaged the participants,” said Lisa Rorvig, board member of the Women’s Network of the Red River Valley in Moorhead.

Beverly Balos, a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School, and Liz Richards, MCBW legal program coordinator, offered a truly hands-on workshop on advanced legal advocacy that included a mock courtroom Order for Protection hearing, complete with a real judge, Judge Mary Louise Klas, presiding over the “courtroom.”

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Agitu Wodajo presents a workshop on providing safety to immigrant battered women.

MCBW Statewide Conference

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Artist Mali Kouanchao offered a workshop on team building through the creation of art. The participants in this workshop painted a gorgeous work of art that was displayed at the end of the conference. Lydia Walker also presented sessions on Wednesday on ethical communication and creating survivor-centered shelter, hotel-motel, and safe home programs.

After dinner on Wednesday, the Pangea World Theater of Minneapolis presented their play on the experiences of immigrant battered women, *Journey to Safety*. “It is easy in the course of our day-to-day work to not always be aware of the diversity we see. The play delivered a clear picture of the isolation battered women and sexual assault victims of diverse ethnicities, languages, abilities, and more feel,” said Rosanne St. Sauver.



The MCBW Statewide Conference Logo, created by artist Mali Kouanchao and MCBW staff members.

Thursday morning offered a final session of workshops, including connecting with the community, groups for battered women who have used force, and obtaining funding for transitional housing programs for battered women. “As programs, we are always struggling for funding, and I did not know there was money out there to applied for. I brought the information from this workshop back to my community and shared it with a local program that already has some transitional housing, and has been trying to offer more housing but had no idea the money was out there,” Vickie McCollum, Women’s Network of the Red River Valley, said of the transitional housing workshop.

The conference closed with a poignant presentation from keynote speaker Olga Trujillo. Olga is a consultant, nationally renowned speaker, survivor, and attorney dedicated to enhancing understanding of—and building effective responses to—violence against women and children. She told her very personal story of experiencing abuse as a child at the hands of her father, and how a few



Olga Trujillo

caring adults in her life gave her the strength to survive. “There were so many favorites for me, however the most moving part of the conference was Olga Trujillo’s closing keynote,” said Eleanor Dildy of Deborah’s Place in Minneapolis. “I was impressed by the way she spoke of the most horrible things that could have happened to a child, yet her humor, grace, and wit are still intact.”

All too soon, it was time to say goodbye to new friends and old and return home to cities and towns, both near and far. Kathryn Lindbom of the Northwoods Coalition for Battered Women in Bemidji said about her experience at the MCBW Statewide Conference, “I was overwhelmed at the number of women and men who carry on with this important work. I felt like I was among so many like-minded people doing humanistic things to try and help our society. I was honored to be among them!”



MCBW Board Members Melissa Gomez and Sharonna Lee.

2006: A Year of Unity for MCBW



Youth and advocates in Hokah prevent dating violence with the Choose Respect Initiative and Houston County Women's Resources.

Public Awareness and Prevention Program Highlights:

- The Center for Disease Control's Choose Respect Initiative, a collaboration with the MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault and 21 member programs, was launched to prevent teen dating violence and sexual assault. Verizon Wireless and the Minnesota Lynx sponsored a Lynx game night for youth, with Verizon Wireless donating \$5,000 for game night giveaways. Verizon Wireless and the MN Lynx also donated \$5,000 for the Choose Respect Teen Leadership Summit, to be held in February 2007 in collaboration with the MN Women's Consortium's Girl Rock! The Capitol event.
- For October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month, MCBW provided member programs with a media advocacy guide, talking points, an online events calendar, and other resources.
- In March, MCBW held a press conference with the MN Network on Abuse in Later Life to release *The 2005 Femicide Report* and to highlight the fact that 9 women over the age of 50 were murdered by male relatives in 2005. The press conference was the lead story on KARE-11 News that evening.
- MCBW was chosen to join the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Communications Task Force, which plans regional media and communications trainings and creates national public awareness campaigns.

Membership and Outreach Program Highlights:

- MCBW implemented a plan to visit every member program around the state by the end of 2007.

- Travel scholarships were offered to member programs for trainings, meetings, and events. Increasing Access scholarships for women of color and domestic violence survivors were also offered.
- Three meetings of MCBW member program directors and team leaders were held to ensure that battered women's program leaders could share information, discuss priorities, and brainstorm new ideas.
- Ten audio conference discussions were offered to members, including Confidentiality for Battered Women's Programs, Full Faith and Credit for Native Women, and Enforcement of No Contact Orders.
- MCBW grew from 75 to 90 member programs.

Fundraising Highlights:

- MCBW and Prevent Child Abuse MN held a fundraising dinner featuring Victor Rivers, spokesperson for the National Network to End Domestic Violence.
- Launched a new fundraising initiative to support the work of our member programs.



Victor Rivers and Someplace Safe's JoAnn Boorman

Training Program Highlights:

- Five sessions of Domestic Violence 101, a training for new advocates, were held in Hokah, St. Cloud, Virginia, and twice in St. Paul.
- MCBW co-sponsored trainings and events with the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project; Breaking Free; Casa de Esperanza; the Hmong Women's Action Team; the Immigrant and Refugee Battered Women's Task Force; the MN Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and the National Congress of American Indians; the MN Network on Abuse in Later Life; the MN Men's Action Network State Conference; and Prevent Child Abuse MN.
- The Women of Color and Native Women's Network held 4 listening sessions in Minnesota and distributed a

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survey to determine the needs of women of color and Native women working in domestic violence programs. The Network also held workshops on testifying before the Legislature and grant writing.

Legislative Program Highlights:

- More than 300 advocates, survivors, and allies attended the 2006 Violence Against Women Action Day Rally at the Capitol in March.
- The 2006 session of the Minnesota Legislature added a gross misdemeanor penalty for violation of no contact order; allowed OFPs issued by another state, an Indian tribe, or U.S. territory to be honored in Minnesota counties and be entered into the statewide protective order database; and bonding funding was appropriated for transitional housing for battered women. In addition, the Safe at Home program was approved to allow mail to be forwarded to a safe location for victims of domestic violence.
- MCBW launched a voter registration and education campaign with member programs to encourage battered women, women of color, and all women to vote in greater numbers in the November 2006 elections.



**VOTE TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE!**

Legal Program Highlights:

- The Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy for Women (DVLAW) Committee met monthly in the last year and has worked on many collaborative projects such as

amicus briefs and/or appeals in cases involving parenting time granted in OFPs; the use of parenting time expeditors and parental rights where a child is a result of rape; and guidelines with respect to what constitutes testimonial statements in response to the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Davis v. Washington*.

- Drafted a general writ of mandamus for use in HRO filing fee questions, along with an informational sheet.
- Developed and conducted an experiential advanced advocacy training on Orders for Protection for the Statewide Conference. This popular training will be repeated in February 2007.
- Addressed issues related to the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) system by gathering information from battered women and programs to use in creating a more effective complaint process and to impact training/policies for GALs. A curriculum on domestic violence tailored for GALs is also in the process of development.
- Invited child support magistrate Maria Pastoor to provide training on new child support changes, specifically what will be required in OFP hearings and provisions in the new law that might affect battered women.

It has been one of MCBW's busiest and most successful years. With expanded staff and program areas, we are continuing to move forward and to implement a work plan specifically designed to support our member programs and to promote safety for women and children. We look forward to working with all of you as we continue to progress in the realization of our vision to end violence against women and children and achieve social justice for all.

Women of Color and Native Women's Network

Deb Foster, Director of Community Connections

We are very excited to highlight that the MCBW Women of Color and Native Women's Network (WOCN) has been actively engaged in research that will facilitate a new two-year action plan. Since this fall through December, we have facilitated four WOCN Listening Sessions statewide and distributed a survey to all member programs to gather vital information in the following interest areas:

- Challenges and gaps in battered women's services to women of color and Native women;
- Suggested strategies on how the WOCN can help

alleviate these challenges and gaps;

- Significant needs in public policy and systems arenas;
- Leadership development areas of interest and the needs of women of color and Native staff working within the battered women's movement

The participation in these Listening Sessions has been tremendous. Our goal was to strategically implement these sessions through out the state to make these as accessible

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We Invite YOU to Be a Partner with MCBW

We are pleased to announce that MCBW is embarking upon a new fundraising initiative that will further enable all community members to be a part of ending domestic violence. With *your* partnership, MCBW will continue to ensure that all battered women and their children throughout Minnesota have the resources they need to establish secure and safe homes for their families.

Here are just some of the actions we can take together:

- Provide statewide leadership in raising public awareness of battering and the needs of battered women and their children;
- Coordinate the combined efforts of the advocates, activists, and programs that support and serve battered women and their children;
- Conduct trainings for new and experienced battered women's advocates to ensure they have the tools they want and need;
- Advocate at the Minnesota Legislature to promote increased funding, greater consequences for batterers, and better tools for law enforcement and courts to hold batterers accountable; and
- Provide teen prevention initiatives to deter dating violence.

By partnering with MCBW, you have the opportunity to affect the lives of hundreds of women and their children not only locally, but on a statewide level. Your contribution helps produce results at the Legislature, supports the people who work day in and day out in our communities, and provides resources for the women and children who need them.

On behalf of our member programs and the women and children of Minnesota, we thank all of our current contributors for their generous support. This past year, with your partnership, we are pleased to have been able to enhance our ability to provide the services our member programs need and deserve. As MCBW continues to expand our capacity, it is critical that we continue to share in our mission to ensure that every system, community, and program has the means to respond more effectively to the needs of battered women and their children.

We invite you to take this opportunity to continue to effect change on a local and statewide level to promote justice, provide safety, and prevent future harm for all women and their children. Please contribute to MCBW so that we may continue our critical work. There is a contribution form on the last page of this newsletter and an envelope addressed to MCBW for your convenience.

If you have any questions about partnering with MCBW, please call Deb Foster, Director of Community Connections, at (651) 646-6177, ext. 13, or e-mail her at dfoster@mcbw.org.



MCBW Hiring Membership and Training Coordinator

MCBW is hiring a full-time Membership and Training Coordinator. The new staff person will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating a comprehensive and successful membership and training plan which will provide technical assistance, support, and training to Coalition member programs to enhance their ability to serve their communities and facilitate networking opportunities between members and others on issues related to battering. (EOE/AA) **Please see the full position description at the MCBW web site at www.mcbw.org.**

To apply, please send your resume and cover letter by **December 22, 2006** to:

Membership and Training Coordinator Hiring Committee
 Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women
 590 Park Street, Suite 410
 St. Paul, MN 55103

The Faces of Domestic Violence in Minnesota: My Sister Kerri

Jan Egge

Every year MCBW releases The Femicide Report, a special report on the Minnesota women and children murdered as a result of domestic violence and child abuse. The report not only raises awareness of the lethality of domestic violence, it also serves as a memorial of the women and children who lost their lives, ensuring that their names will never be forgotten. However, due to space limitations, we can only include a short paragraph about each victim in The Femicide Report. What often goes unsaid in The Femicide Report is the effect these tragic murders have on the family and friends left behind. This is the story of one of the victims from 2006, Kerri Robinson of Franklin, MN, written by her sister, Jan Egge. Kerri's story clearly illustrates the immense power and control abusers have over their victims, the danger battered women face, and the toll it takes on family and friends when a woman is murdered by an intimate partner or family member. Let us never forget Kerri's name and her story. Let us come together as a community to promote justice, provide safety, and prevent future harm for all battered women and their children.

We all face adversity in life, at times trying to find answers to questions for which there may be none. As our family faces the future, we confront questions that no family should have to ask itself: "Could we have done more?" "Why didn't we get Kerri out of there sooner?" "Why Kerri?" "Why our family?"

Well, it did happen to my sister and to our family. On January 30, 2006, my sister, Kerri Marie Robinson, was murdered by her boyfriend, Dirk Goelz. She was only thirty-six years old.

Kerri was a beautiful woman—a mother, a daughter, an aunt, a great-aunt, and a friend. She had two daughters and two sons. She had a personality and a sense of humor like no other. Kerri wore her heart of her sleeve for anyone who needed it and she always tried to believe the best about everyone. She deeply loved animals, especially horses, and nature. Kerri was devoted to her family and was often the first one to remind the rest of us about an upcoming birthday or anniversary. She was greatly loved by her family and all the people whose lives she had such an impact on. None of us can understand the senseless act of domestic violence that took Kerri from us. We were raised to value each and every person on this earth, not to batter, abuse, and murder.

Kerri's boyfriend battered her. For many months, Dirk had controlled her every move, but just before her murder Kerri had begun to try to take back her power. He took Kerri's life as an attempt to regain his control over Kerri. He loaded a 12-gauge shotgun and chased her down in the home they shared. He shot Kerri to death. She was found wearing her coat and shoes, with her house keys near a locked door. I believe Kerri was trying to leave Dirk that day, but I will never fully know what happened. Kerri can't tell us what happened to her in the last moments of her life.

Kerri met Dirk in the late spring of 2005. Early on in their relationship, he convinced Kerri to let go of her home and move in with him. She was thrilled to move to a farm where she could be with her horses every day, a dream she'd had since childhood. She sold her car after he promised the use of his vehicle. She quit her job because he encouraged her to spend more time on her online college courses. Kerri was studying criminal justice and hoped to be a crime scene investigator. She'd been on the Dean's List in the spring, but by the fall quarter of 2005, she had failed a class and was facing losing her financial aid. By that time, she expressed frustration with her life with Dirk. "I had a home, my own home, a good job, and a car. Now I feel like I have nothing," she said. Her boyfriend was now controlling everything she did—where she lived, when she drove, how she earned her living.

Kerri's confidence began to weaken as the relationship went on. She would burst into tears at the drop of a hat. On Thanksgiving of 2005, I was with Kerri as she tried to study. I could see that she was becoming frustrated with trying to concentrate on her work. She began to shake and sob into her hands, asking, "Why can't he just let me go? I don't love him and I don't want to be with him. I'm scared. I have no money, no job, no car, nowhere to go..."

While I held her, Kerri opened up and told me about the horror of what was happening at home. Life on the farm was like walking on eggshells. It was always tense as she waited for Dirk to blow up and then hurt her. She tried to do things the way he said they should be done, but even then he picked apart whatever she'd done and left her feeling like she couldn't

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Kerri Marie Robinson

My Sister Kerri

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do anything right. Like many abusers, he was trying to control Kerri by destroying her self-esteem. Dirk was also threatening to kill her.

At home, Dirk was a completely different person than the man we all saw at family gatherings. “You don’t know him,” Kerri said. “He’s not the person you think he is. He’s different when no one else is around.” It’s common for a batterer to show a charming face to the public and a completely different one to his partner. He tried to isolate her and get her to pick petty fights with her family and friends. He tortured animals as a threat of what could happen to her, including shooting a squirrel in front of Kerri and making her watch it die a painful death. He called her stupid, worthless, and constantly told her no one wanted her around. All of these were typical tactics a batterer uses to control his victim.

As time went on, Dirk’s threats to kill Kerri increased in their intensity and descriptiveness. They went from, “I am going to kill you,” to, “I have no problem killing you, the kids, and every animal on this place. Then I’m going to kill myself because I will not sit in prison for the rest of my life over someone like you.” One day, Dirk hit Kerri’s daughter, Cassie. Kerri went to the phone to call the police but Dirk said, “Go ahead, but I guarantee that every one of you will be dead by the time they get here.” She hung up the phone.

After Kerri told me what was going on, I began to formulate a plan to try to change things for Kerri and help her to be safe. She finally had someone on her side, someone who saw the changes in her and wanted to help. Throughout the rest of November and December, Kerri began sending personal items home with me to keep safe for her until she could leave the farm. Kerri was getting stronger and as the new year began, I saw her getting the courage and the determination to change her life. As January progressed, I felt Dirk knew I was on to him, as he began to pull away from me and the rest of our family. He now told Kerri that he would kill her before she could see me again. During a phone call to her, I heard him ask, “Who’s on the f***** phone?” When she said it was me, he said, “Tell your f***** sister she can’t help you now.”

He began to lose control of Kerri in mid-January. She was able to find a car, a job, and a new place to live. She took some belongings to her home and was sneaking things to her new employer’s place. Dirk began stalking her at work, often showing up there three or four times a day for no reason. At home he followed her around, questioning her when her phone would ring.

During the last four days of Kerri’s life, he took away her car keys and constantly hid her phone. When she could find the phone, Kerri would sneak away to the barn to make calls. She was forced to sleep in her car on at least two of those cold January nights, while he stood in the doorway or the window of the house, grinning at her while dangling the keys.

Dirk’s threats became increasingly violent in Kerri’s last days. He slammed her against a wall and told her she would never leave the farm alive. She was terrified and didn’t know what to do. The threats kept her trapped and fearful. His final threat to her was, “I don’t care where you go, I don’t care where you try to hide, I will hunt you down. I will find you and I will kill you.” As Kerri hid in the barn that day, sobbing, she now became afraid for her entire family’s safety. She didn’t come to our home that Sunday as she normally did.

On Monday, January 30th, the last day of her life, Kerri moved several of the family’s horses off the property because she was scared she wouldn’t get them back if something happened to her. The last time I ever spoke to my sister was that afternoon. We talked about loving each other and being afraid for her. My final words to my sister were, “I don’t want to lose you, Kerri. I love you.”

Our family has lived with Kerri’s murder for almost a year now. On September 29, 2006, a jury convicted Dirk Goelz of first-degree murder, with a past pattern of domestic abuse. He was sentenced to life in prison, but he will be eligible for parole in about 30 years. He will go free. Kerri will never have that opportunity.

Our family does not want Kerri’s murder to be in vain. If you see my sister in yourself or someone you love, please get help today. In Minnesota, you can find safety by calling Day One at 1-866-223-1111. Outside of Minnesota, you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. There are many, many women who have gotten out safely. Some of them are now battered women’s advocates. Trust their advice. Trust their help. Do not leave your loved ones, your children, and your family asking the same difficult questions we will ask ourselves for the rest of our lives.

Thank You to Our Amazing Donors

Thank you to the wonderful people, organizations, and businesses that have generously donated to the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women. Your generosity in the form of cash and in-kind donations is very much appreciated. With *your* partnership, MCBW will continue to work to promote justice, provide safety, and prevent future harm for all battered women and their children.

In respect for donor privacy, individual donor names will no longer be printed in our newsletter.

For more information on tax-deductible donations to the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, please call Deb Foster at (651) 646-6177, ext. 13 or e-mail her at dfoster@mcbw.org.

Women of Color and Native Women's Network

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as possible. These sessions were held in Crookston, Duluth, Mankato and St. Paul. Our gratitude goes out to all the programs that assisted with making these session possible by providing a host site and helping with the recruitment of WOCN staff. Those programs include Migrant Health Service, the Committee Against Domestic Abuse, and the American Indian Community Housing Organization and the Center for Non-Violence. The St. Paul listening session was held at the MCBW office.

During the first part of 2007, MCBW will be engaged in a process of assembling and analyzing the data from the four listening sessions and the survey thus pulling together a team of WOCN program leadership and listening session and survey participants. This team will examine the outcome report and make recommendations for the two-year action plan. We are very energized about this new endeavor and the chance to augment the

services and opportunities for the women of color and Native women whose work gives women who have been battered and their children a chance at safety every day.

PLEASE NOTE: Throughout December, we will continue the process of gathering feedback from program member staff on the Women of Color and Native Women's Network online survey. Your feedback is critical to the comprehensiveness of this data. We invite you to be a part of this important two-year plan by going to www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=40632471611 and taking a few minutes to complete our easy online survey.

In addition, if you are interested in participating in the leadership team that will be evaluating the outcomes and making recommendations for the action plan, please contact Deb Foster at (651) 646-6177 ext. 13 or e-mail her at dfoster@mcbw.org.

Welcome to MCBW's Newest Member Programs!

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is pleased to welcome the member programs that recently joined the Coalition:

**Bois Forte Victim Service Unit, Nett Lake
Metro State University Community Violence Prevention Institute, St. Paul**

If your organization is interested in joining our network of programs statewide, please call us at (651) 646-6177 ext. 16 or go to our web site at www.mcbw.org/membership.htm for more information.

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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We thank you for your generous support of MCBW!