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Contact:
Audra Fullerton
KCSDV Communications Coordinator
afullerton@kcsdv.org
785-232-9784

City of Newton Model Community for Victim Safety and Offender Accountability Regarding Domestic Violence

Newton, KS, September 12, 2011 – A group of community partners in Newton was selected in January of 2010 as a pilot site for a state project funded by a federal grant. Newton used the federal dollars to enhance the community's response to domestic violence and provide safety for victims and their children through the criminal justice domestic violence response process.

The community partners working on the project have strengthened the overall effectiveness of the entire domestic violence process including 911, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and domestic violence advocates by incorporating best practices, model policies, extensive training and funding to help the community. GTEAP, which stands for Grant to Encourage Arrest and Protection Order Policies, is a U.S. Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women grant intended to improve the multi-disciplinary approach to addressing domestic violence.

The U.S. Surgeon General has declared that attacks by male intimate partners are the number one cause of injury to women between the ages of fifteen and forty-four. In 2009, Harvey County 911 Dispatch received 500 domestic violence related calls which resulted in 259 incidents where law enforcement were involved and 203 arrests (KBI report "DV and Rape Statistics in KS" November, 2010).

There are unique barriers to safety that victims in rural communities face, including the fact that rural perpetrators of domestic violence and sexual assault violate protective orders three times more often than perpetrators in more urban locations and that delayed police and medical response time when responding to isolated rural residences make it difficult for victims to report abuse, leave abusive relationships or seek services.

Greg Nickel, Newton Municipal Court Administrator, explains, "This issue deals with problems that are deeply rooted in home lives and don't lend themselves to being resolved by a blanket, one-size fits all solution. The GTEAP program has had a phenomenal effect on our ability to substantively address domestic violence in our community."

Members of the Newton/Harvey County GTEAP Community Partnership include:

- Newton Chief of Police
- Harvey County Sheriff
- The City & County Attorneys
- City & District Court Judges
- Harvey County DV/SA Task Force
- Parole Services
- Court Services
- Community Corrections
- Batterer's Intervention Program
- Newton' City Manager

Grant funding began in January 2010 and has since funded extensive domestic violence trainings for Partnership Members, including all law enforcement, corrections personnel, advocates and many local attorneys and judges. The grant has also supported the creation of a Coordinated Community Response team (CCR) which meets regularly and has funded three full-time positions, including the Newton Police Department DV Detective Mitchell Nedrow who specializes in domestic violence cases for victim safety & offender accountability.

“Through this project, not only have I investigated numerous domestic violence incidents,” says Nedrow, “these investigations have led to larger felony arrests...[w]ithout this position being in place, these detailed reports and investigations would not have been possible.”

The two other funded positions are the Harvey County DV/SA Task Force Police Response Advocate (PRA) Coordinator and Newton Municipal Court Victim-Witness Coordinator. PRA Coordinator Lisa Donahue oversees the Police Response Advocacy (PRA) program which includes specially trained advocates who respond to all DV crime scenes in Newton to provide advocacy services to victims and their families. Newton Municipal Court Victim-Witness Coordinator Terri Headrick works to assist domestic violence victims navigate the Municipal Court process.

In February 2011 the city of Newton's GTEAP project was presented with the Project of the Year award at Kansas' Annual Safe Homes, Safe Streets reception hosted by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV).

Joyce Grover, the Executive Director of KCSDV said about this project “We honor everyone involved with this transformative project that, in many cases, will be life-saving for victims of domestic violence. Lessons learned from this project will be used to improve statewide response to victims of domestic violence crimes across Kansas.”

The grant cycle for the current award ends September 30, 2011. Applications have been submitted to continue the project for an additional three year cycle, but award recipients have not yet been announced.

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Founded in 1982, the purpose of KCSDV is the prevention and elimination of sexual and domestic violence through a statewide network of programs providing support and safety for all victims of sexual and domestic violence and stalking, with primary focus on women and their children; direct services; public awareness and education; advocacy for victims; comprehensive prevention; and, social change efforts. Learn more at www.kcsdv.org or www.helpchangekansas.com