

# Do something about domestic violence

BY SANDRA ESTERS  
LONGMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

October is nationally recognized as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Every year in the United States, 3 million to 4 million victims suffer at the hands of a current or former intimate partner, and about 1,500 women are killed by their intimate partners.

The victims are people we care about: our mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, co-workers, affluent, poor, educated and disadvantaged. Victims are anyone. As a community, what does that mean to us? What difference can we make — *do we make?*

As part of a public awareness campaign, LEVI (Longmont Ending Violence Initiative), in collaboration with Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley and the Longmont Police Department, sponsored a movie series illustrating the far-reaching tragedies and wounds inflicted by domestic violence. The purpose of the movies was not to emotionally devastate and titillate the public, but rather to prompt purposeful action against domestic violence.

The first movie of the series, "Telling Amy's Story," is a documentary about a 2001 Pennsylvania domestic vi-

olence homicide that shows what happens when *nothing* happens. Amy was punched, strangled, stalked and threatened, suffered broken bones and bruises, was shot at and was abused by her husband of four years. When Amy finally decided to leave him, he shot her in the head while her parents and two young children waited for her in the car.

As it turned out, Amy reached out to law enforcement on a few occasions, obtaining a temporary protection order, followed by her husband's arrest and an overnight stay in jail for violating it. On another occasion, Amy's husband was arrested for firing a gun in the car during an argument and was sentenced to probation. Amy's family, friends and co-workers seemed to be aware of her husband's abusiveness, but none of them called the police — ever. Amy also relied on her parents to remove her from acute incidents, but by and large, Amy — like many victims — was left to deal with a violent husband on her own.

The movie took our collective breath away. However, it also prompted a discussion regarding possible avenues for Amy's escape that might have yielded a happier outcome.

We asked ourselves what we could

have done for Amy if she had lived in Longmont. Whom could we have called? How could we have made things different?

In Longmont, we are lucky to have several agencies that exist solely to assist victims of domestic violence. Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley (303-772-4422), LEVI (303-774-4534) and the Longmont Police Department, with a dedicated Domestic Violence Unit (303-651-8501), are excellent community resources. Domestic violence affects all of us; it will take all of us to resolve this very real threat to our safety and well-being.

That being said, what can we do when somebody we know is being abused by an intimate partner? The best thing you can do is *something* — call the police, call Safe Shelter, go with that victim to get help. *Anything* is better than nothing. Though many people hesitate to interfere in the private lives of others, these abusive situations rarely, if ever, correct themselves. In fact, the danger usually escalates and can become life-threatening.

So make the call. The life you save may be Amy's.

*Detective Sandra Esters is with the Longmont Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit.*

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