

Longmont detective hailed for domestic violence work

By PIERRETTE J. SHIELDS
LONGMONT TIMES-CALL

LONGMONT — For Detective Sandra Esters, it isn't all about nabbing suspects and putting them on a track to prison. It's about putting victims on a track to safety and recovery

from abusive relationships, she said.

Esters is the 2011 winner of the Beth Haynes Award for her work on domestic violence cases. The award is named for Boulder Police Officer Beth Haynes, who was shot and

killed by a suspect on April 16, 1994, as she responded to a scene. She is credited with saving the lives of two adults and two children originally targeted in the domestic violence incident.

Esters is scheduled to re-

ceive the award at 2 p.m. today in the auditorium at the Boulder Public Library.

"This is a really unpopular specialty," she said of her work as one of two detectives assigned to the Longmont Police Department's domestic vio-

lence unit. "Most people don't like dealing with the emotions and trauma."

Esters was assigned to the unit about a year ago after serving as a school resource officer for several years. She said she



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Esters

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sought out the assignment when the position opened.

However, her first experience helping a domestic violence victim was shortly after she started working as a solo patrol officer. A young woman ran up to her car and reported she had been assaulted by her boyfriend in his home when she had gone there to break up with him. At the time, there was not enough evidence to make an arrest, but Esters said she talked to the wom-

an and warned her that the relationship was unsafe and implored her to stay away from the man.

She didn't think her advice would be heeded.

Two years later, Esters responded to a car wreck, and as she was helping with the investigation, another car slipped on the ice and crashed as well. When she ran to check on the occupants, a woman in the car asked if Esters recognized her. She did.

"She said, 'I heard everything you said. I was just afraid of him,'" Esters recalled the woman saying. "She said, 'I never went back there.'"

Esters' eyes welled up with tears as she recounted the story.

"She said, 'I think about you every day.'"

In another year, the woman called Esters asking for advice to help a friend out of an abusive relationship. The detective said it was eye-opening to find out that her efforts as a police officer

were helping, even if it was not apparent immediately.

"It is just my hope that something sinks in," she said. "What a gift to get from that one young woman. That was so heavy for me. ... This is why I do what I do."

In another case, a woman who had escaped from her increasingly abusive relationship with Esters' help sent her an email to thank her for her help. Esters carries a copy of the email with her.

She said she is honored to be associated with the work

and bravery that Haynes showed in 1994 and that she mourns for Haynes.

"It is so final," she said of the shooting that claimed the Boulder officer. "It is so violent and senseless, and I think about her family. ... It is a reminder that it is the real thing when we go out."

Longmont Detective Mark Deaton and Longmont Officer Randy Lucero won the award in 2010. In 2008, Lucero's wife, Detective Tori Lucero, won the award, which is selected by a committee comprised of representatives

from nearly every law enforcement agency in the county, the SafeHouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley, the Boulder County District Attorney's Office, the Boulder County Department of Housing and Human Services, and the Domestic Violence Research Team.

Fifteen people were nominated for this year's award. This was Esters' first nomination.

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