

PFJCI
Monthly

NEWS LETTERS BULLETIN



Welcome

May brings Mother's Day to communities across America and in many cases, it also brings joy and honor to those who are the comforting hands to children. But as we know, for DV victims it is an especially hard time to have the day punctuated with blame, yelling, violence and pain. This Mother's Day may be the first one that your clients experience in safety and freedom. It may be the day that some determine the hurting must stop and they decide to seek your help. For all, we hope it will be a day when we renew our commitment to mothers, to all women and to all victims of violence in intimate relationships.

News from PFJCI locations

Grand Openings of two new PFJCI sites will happen in May, so congratulations to all of those supporters, volunteers and staff who are bringing hope in new communities.

The Erie County Family Justice Center opens in Buffalo, New York on May 2, 2006. You can read about their plans in the April issue of the PFJCI Monthly Bulletin. The Knoxville Family Justice Center in Tennessee opens May 19, 2006, and is profiled in this issue.

Additional dates have been confirmed by OVW for the future. Boston Family Justice Center plans to open June 13, 2006 and the Northwest Ohio Family Justice Center plans to open its six sites between June and September, with a Grand Opening in October, 2006. Watch for information about these openings in future issues. You can see photos of Grand Openings PFJCI Website Photo Gallery.

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Get involved!

If you have news items for the Monthly Bulletin, please submit them to Jennifer Bodine by the 10th of each month at

Jennifer@sdfjc.org

and we will include them in the next bulletin, subject to OVW final approval.

If you would like to subscribe directly to the Monthly Bulletin, please email

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May, 2006
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Site Insight: Knoxville, TN and Bexar County, TX

Knoxville Family Justice Center

"Abuse is about control. This Initiative is truly looking squarely at the societal ill of power and control," said Amy Dilworth, Executive Director of the Knoxville Family Justice Center, slated to open May 19, 2006. "That is something this population of providers has come to understand. As we start to serve from a co-located FJC, we have to start from that perspective. We can't approach the solution from power and control; we have to look at it from choice and opportunity."

Amy Dilworth, MS, LPC, MHSP, is used to getting teased about her degrees by the attorneys and physicians that she has worked with in Domestic Violence since 1996. What it comes down to is lots of training and lots of experience, which made her the perfect choice to come on board last month as the Executive Director.

"I first heard about the President's Initiative as a DV worker, and I was impressed that the issue had caught such national attention," said Dilworth. "I was pleased that the President was going to take action on an issue that has impacted society as a whole for a long time - it seemed like a really wise choice." In Knoxville, the 2004 figures show 16,000 reported cases of domestic violence to the police and sheriff.

"Now, when I tell people about collaborative responses, co-located services and partnerships among DV responders, some say, 'You are just now thinking of this?' Well, Knoxville has been coming to the table to address this issue as a community for more than 10 years. There are different philosophies, of course, but I have been impressed and surprised at times at our partners' willingness to work things out."

Knoxville has 63 partners, with nine agencies co-locating. Some are research partners and some are task force-type members who won't do client assistance directly, but many are from the City of Knoxville departments -- Children's Services, Housing, and Employment, for example. They are poised to help clients with next steps toward independent living, once the safety issues are met.

The Grand Opening is May 19, and the Grand Opening committee has already been sending invitations to about 500 guests - city officials, state and federal legislators, dignitaries, partners and potential donors.

"I still am working two jobs, Executive Director of the FJC and my former position. So, I'm looking forward to just being the Exec, and am hiring a Program Manager to help with day to day operations of the FJC," said Dilworth. "We have already hired the Systems Engineer and an Administrative Assistant. For now, that will be the extent of the FJC staff. Our plan is to use volunteers for reception, childcare, and other needs. Intake is being done by our advocate partners."

The operations manual has just been approved by OVV and they are planning an operational training the first week of May. It will be done in two stages to accommodate the partner staffing during the transition. Then, they will have six days of practice runs.

"We have media lined up from the two local TV and newspaper outlets," said Dilworth.

"I'm sure those sites that are already up and running know exactly what I'm going through right now. Our construction is at completion and our furniture is starting to arrive. We are working on computers - they are coming and I'm hoping that everything gets here when it's supposed to. We do have a back-up plan to borrow from the city if we need to. I have learned that over the years. Put Plan B in place -- Always have a back-up plan."

Knoxville SpeedReader

- Grand Opening May 19, 2006
- TV and Newspaper coverage confirmed
- 63 on-site and offsite partners
- Hiring a Program Manager



Amy Dilworth, Executive Director
Knoxville Family Justice Center

Site Insight, continued

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Bexar County Family Justice Center, San Antonio, Texas

"The best thing about being open is the response of the families," said Barbara McCormick, operations manager for the Bexar County Family Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas. "Instead of getting help piece by piece, they have so many services available in one location. After only one visit, they feel they have made a lot of progress and there are people who will help."

Open since August 1, 2005, the Bexar County FJC had served 4,380 clients as of March 31, 2006. The FJC is located in a former hospital building now occupied by over 30 specialty clinics, and McCormick, as well as executive director Bettina Richardson finds this to be a good location for their community.

"We have been able to cross-train some of the health personnel in our building," said Richardson, "and it is making a big difference. We have seen physicians step forward now that they know there is a place to send a patient. We are finding that they are more likely to identify and pursue these issues. We are now looking at working with a family practice group to identify the general health of the family as a whole when they come to the FJC."

"If physicians and nurses have a DV victim, they can actually walk her down the hall to us, rather than just pass out a phone number on a card," said McCormick. "I think it's gratifying for them to be a part of the solution."

Looking back, Richardson can see how there were positive factors in getting the community united behind the FJC effort. In particular, the community had already established long-term partner relationships in the area of domestic violence.

"Social services, law enforcement, mental health providers and health care professionals had worked together for many years. This was a natural progression - challenging, but natural," Richardson said.

The challenges have shifted since first planning the FJC. According to Richardson, the initial challenge was technology. Now the challenge is keeping the partners enthused and consistently committed.



**Bettina Richardson, Executive Director
Bexar County Family Justice Center**

Bexar County SpeedReader

- Served 4,380 clients since opening
- Cross trains health professionals
- Partners share appointment calendars
- Average client visit lasts 4 hours
- Strong chaplaincy program

"We have not lost a single partner, for which we are very grateful. However, we have been willing to continuously evaluate our expectations and make adjustments that fit reality," said Richardson. "No one knew how the Bexar County Family Justice Center would actually look and work. Now that we do, we are in a better position to define the Working Agreements and MOUs with each partner."

One of the keys to maintaining partner relationships in Bexar is good communication and realistic planning. Spending time to bond and share trends and success in each of their disciplines is very important.

In addition, the FJC has installed shared calendar access to each of the partners for scheduling appointments, so they can make sure clients are coming back and that the appointments are coordinated. They are finding that the average client visit spans four hours and must include a healthy meal for the whole family, not just quick snacks.

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Site Insight, continued

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Another successful collaboration has been cross-training from immigration attorneys. The social service personnel now have the knowledge to tell immigrant victims that many of the threats and risks that their abusers use to oppress them are not true. It's a part of the total effort to empower the client.

"When they walk across the threshold, we now ask them what they want to accomplish that day. We had found that, if we were not careful, we would begin to take over their lives and tell them what they needed. As a group, we determined that this was unacceptable and have learned to allow clients to have control over their choices."

Another factor that has contributed to the success of the Bexar County FCJ, according to Richardson, is solid, consistent leadership.

"The lead agency, the District Attorney's Office, has remained committed and enthusiastic; our Learning Exchange Team has remained consistent in its composition and level of commitment; and our partners have remained consistent in the presence and degree of involvement." Richardson said.

McCormick has found that flexibility is the most important quality to maintain - a challenge for an operations manager. "We are dealing with families and children who may be tired, hungry, frightened. We have to go with the flow of the client and help them through all of it."

Another success factor at the Bexar County FJC has been a strong chaplaincy program under the direction of Julia Clark, who has worked to create a strong sense of unity and cooperation at the FJC.

"She has added a sense of hospitality for the clients and the partners," said Richardson.

Richardson foresees that one of the next challenges will be sustainability and that future FJCs will expand to include services to the entire family. At Bexar, they are seeing that strong children services are essential to family healing.

The biggest challenge in their community, however, is the steady increase of domestic violence and child abuse. That may be the most important factor driving the partners and supporters of the Bexar County Family Justice Center to make this new approach a success, according to Richardson.

"We all agree that something must be done, and it must be done differently."



Above, the Knoxville Family Justice Center, opening May 19. Right, the Bexar County Family Justice Center in San Antonio, open since August 1, 2005.

Spotlight On: Judge Carl Ashley

PFJCI faculty

Each issue of the Monthly Bulletin will highlight a PFJCI faculty member.

Judge Ashley was elected to Milwaukee County Circuit Court in 1999, where he served in general misdemeanor court. In 2001, he was assigned to the Domestic Violence Courts. He became the senior Domestic Violence Judge in 2002. He has received advanced Domestic Violence Training from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Ashley received the Milwaukee Women's Center Sam Stellman Justice for Women Award in recognition of outstanding compassion, commitment, and leadership in promoting justice for women and families affected by domestic violence. He also received Innovator of the Year Award in recognition of vision, creativity, and innovative spirit in 2003. Ashley serves as a national faculty member for the President's Family Justice Center Initiative and for the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence. He has presented at the Criminal Justice Institute in Minnesota on Oversight for Domestic Violence Probationers. At the 10th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act he presented on urban stalking. He participated in the United States Department of Justice Safety and Accountability Audit in Washington D.C. sponsored by the National Institute of Justice in cooperation with the Office on Violence Against Women.



My involvement with Domestic Violence came suddenly and vividly. I was a circuit court judge in the year 2000, and one day at the end of my calendar, my chief judge asked me to come see him. Since I had only been on the court a couple of years, I was a little nervous.

"Carl," he said, "I've got a great opportunity for you and I hope you'll accept. I would like you to be involved in a specialized Domestic Violence court. There is a training coming up in Miami."

I was intrigued, but I had been scheduled for months to do advanced evidence training in Reno, so I told him about the conflict.

"That's unfortunate," he said, "because you are going to Miami."

I'm so glad he was insistent, because I think that judicial training is one of the most important aspects of ending Domestic Violence.

About six months prior to my DV training, one of my cases had a domestic violence element to it, although it was not DV court. I'm a man of the world, I thought. I'm sure I'm enlightened and know what to say. In front of me were the victim and the perpetrator. I turned to the woman and said, "You are allowing this man to do this to you. You have to take control of your life." Then I turned to the perp and said, "I'm going to send you to an anger management class."

Now I know that most anger management classes sometimes help abusers become better batterers. And that woman will never want to come forward and tell of her pain to anyone, let alone a justice officer.

What I should have done is congratulated her on coming forward, encouraged her to come back. "You may not win this time," I could have said, "but keep coming back until you are safe."

As I became more involved in DV, I went to more trainings and then became involved as a trainer in Milwaukee and eventually with the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence run by the U.S. Dept. of Justice. I got to meet a lot of people involved in DV -- trainers, judges, advocates -- and then, through the Judicial Oversight Initiative, I was able to meet many more judges and see what they were doing in their jurisdictions.

It wasn't until I came to the San Diego Family Justice Center in 2002 that I understood that the whole concept of an FJC is centered on making it easier for the victim. Then it became simple. Let's not victimize the victim. If we really want to help folks, we need to get them in one area, where they can more reasonably get help.

From a judicial standpoint, I've gotta' be hopeful. I've come late to the movement, but we've come light years since then. I think we've come a long way regarding criminal prosecutions and protection orders. There are new initiatives for training judges and, to some extent, there are proper judicial actions that are becoming standard. How do we get those judges who are lagging behind to get up to speed? How do we bring everyone farther along? We have a ways to go.

For instance, I just attended a roundtable in Washington, D.C. on victim autonomy. It was an outstanding experience, discussing how to balance autonomy with safety. Unless you really sit down with a victim, you can't analyze all the dynamics that are going on, why they can't just "walk away." It's hard for others to understand the complexity.

As a judicial officer, I think we need to take what we are learning about DV co-located responses and apply that to other areas, such as immigration, divorce and custody matters. We need to take what we are seeing in criminal court and bring it to the civil matters as well.

Another factor is the impact on kids. I have gone through a mandatory rotation and am now a Juvenile Delinquency, Neglect and Abuse judge. It's such a vicious cycle as so many of the young children have witnessed and experienced abuse that they are behaving the same way. We need to break the cycle.

I remember being at the 10th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act ceremony, and one woman raised her hand and asked, "When will the system stop re-victimizing women by taking their children?" For some social workers, it's a difficult balance. That's why coordinated support under the FJC model is so important. It responds to a situation by suggesting, I understand what you are going through, maybe you can have some options. And it gives enough support for the social workers, the detectives, the prosecutors, and the judges to see the victim start to think, "Maybe I can do this. I never thought I could, but if I have help, I might be able to handle this."