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Governor Evers Presents Outstanding Achievement in Domestic Abuse Issues Awards

MADISON – Governor Tony Evers presented awards to honor two individuals for their contributions in assisting survivors of domestic violence in a special ceremony held today at the state Capitol. The ceremony was hosted as part [of Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#), a statewide effort to raise awareness about the effects of domestic abuse.

This is the 31st year the Governor’s Council on Domestic Abuse has selected recipients for the Outstanding Achievement in Domestic Abuse Issues awards.

“From hotline workers and first responders to advocates and legal professionals, I’m proud of the strong teams we have here in Wisconsin working to support survivors and disrupt the cycle of violence,” said Gov. Evers. “Their service and commitment to building a safer, stronger Wisconsin is heroic, and it’s why we must ensure these folks across our state have the resources they need to do their important work of helping keep Wisconsinites and their families safe.”

At the ceremony, Governor Tony Evers and council members presented awards in two categories:

Marlys Howe of Madison, Deputy Director of the Dane County District Attorney’s office was honored with the *Sharon Lewandowski Justice Award*, which recognizes an individual or an organization for outstanding accomplishment in promoting safety, empowerment, and justice for victims of domestic abuse and their children. Marlys has more than 30 years of combined experience working in various systems and is deeply committed to advocating for survivors and their families. What sets her apart are the many ways in which she creatively collaborates with a variety of stakeholders across Dane County to advance safety, empowerment, systems change, and justice for victims and survivors of domestic violence.

Antonia Drew Norton of Milwaukee was honored with the *Patricia Waschbisch Legacy Award for Lifetime Achievement*, which honors an individual who has provided exceptional services to many survivors of domestic abuse over the course of a career and who has promoted a vision of ending violence and achieving social justice. The award is named for and commemorates the legacy of an advocate who lost her life in a domestic homicide in 2013. Norton holds a national certification as a Domestic Violence Counselor and serves as the director and founder of Asha Family Services,

which began 34 years ago. Her achievements include program director for the End Domestic Abuse coalition in Wisconsin, creating evidence-based strategies and prevention methods utilized across the nation, and extending her business into micro-enterprises to help survivors gain employment and skills in small business settings. Norton's comprehensive approach ensures healing and independence as a result of her support. She has advocated for thousands of women from various backgrounds and is instrumental in transforming and saving lives of many.

"The dedication and support our partner agencies offer survivors and their families is awe-inspiring." said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "This type of care is essential for helping survivors rebuild their lives and heal. We are so grateful for their commitment to Wisconsin's children and families."

Last year, there were 101,000 hotline phone calls that served a total of 38,221 survivors of domestic abuse. Through strong partnerships and innovative approaches, individuals across the state are receiving specialized trauma-informed care that is allowing them to heal and become independent again.

One of those innovative approaches is the Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) Pilot Program. The program, which is in its second year, is a proven, evidence-based practice that moves domestic violence survivors into safe, stable, permanent housing as quickly as possible. Once housed, survivors have access to supportive, holistic advocacy resources to rebuild their lives. Four key components of a DVHF model include: a survivor-driven approach, trauma-informed and mobile services, flexible financial assistance, and multifaceted community engagement.

Learn about the types of domestic abuse and where to find domestic abuse services at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/domesticabuse>.

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