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Governor Evers Presents Outstanding Achievement in Domestic Abuse Issues Awards

MADISON – Governor Tony Evers presented awards to honor three 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 32nd year the Governor’s Council on Domestic Abuse has selected recipients for the Outstanding Achievement in Domestic Abuse Issues awards.

"Wisconsin is fortunate to have a network of dedicated professionals who are working tirelessly to support survivors and disrupt the cycle of violence. From hotline workers and first responders to advocates and legal professionals, their service and commitment to building a safer, stronger state are invaluable," said Gov. Evers. "It's our responsibility to ensure these folks have the support needed to continue their important work of protecting Wisconsinites and their families."

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

Kristin Olgren of Madison, Manager of 24/7 Programs at DAIS 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. Kristin, a dedicated advocate at DAIS, has transformed the shelter program through her compassionate leadership and commitment to client-centered care. She has created a safe and supportive environment for residents through her deep understanding of survivors’ needs and a true passion for social justice. Kristin’s innovative approach to programming, focus on staff development, and diligent efforts to improve services made her an exceptional recipient of this significant award.

Stefanos (Steve) Krallis of Madison, was honored with the *Courage Award*, which recognizes survivors of domestic abuse who have overcome adversity and had the courage to survive, have empowered themselves, and serve as an inspiration for others. Steve, a courageous survivor of domestic abuse, has overcome hardship and used his experience to inspire others. He has helped countless people understand the lasting impact of domestic violence and the importance of seeking support through powerful storytelling in restorative justice seminars. Steve's constant strength and dedication to raising awareness make him a true model of resilience and empowerment, deserving of this influential award.

Marianna Rodriguez of Milwaukee, was honored with the *Patricia Waschbishch Lifetime Achievement Award*, 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. Marianna is a dedicated advocate for domestic violence survivors, particularly Latinas. Over the past two decades, she has founded the Latina Resource Center, a culturally specific program offering support and resources. Her tireless efforts have led to increased access to services, comprehensive program development, and expertise sharing. Her steady commitment and passion have made a significant impact on the lives of countless individuals affected by domestic violence.

“At one of the most critical and vulnerable moments in a person’s life, domestic abuse agencies provide survivors the safety and support they need to keep moving forward,” said DCF Secretary-designee Jeff Pertl. “These agencies provide a sanctuary where families can safely access counseling, legal advocacy, and housing that allows them to heal and to live safe, stable, and financially independent lives. We are forever grateful for the important work they do and their commitment to Wisconsin’s families and communities.”

Last year, there were 112,407 hotline phone calls that served a total of 32,441 survivors of domestic abuse in Wisconsin. 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 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. Initial findings from the program show reduced exposure to violence, stability in mental health systems, and housing stability for survivors.

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

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