



Winter 2012-13



A victim's story



Dion Wilks

Local woman lost her life to a stalker

Dion Wilks was a beautiful, 25-year-old professional woman with a bright future when, on the night of Feb. 1, 2003, a former boyfriend-turned-stalker shot her three times and left her to die under the wheels of traffic on Interstate 5 near Salem.

Dion had grown up in Tillamook, attended school here and gone on to stellar achievements at Oregon State University, Oregon Health & Sciences University and Oregon National Guard. She was bright, driven to succeed, physically strong and fit. Yet she was unable to either foresee or prevent the violence that took her life.

The tragic events of that night still haunt her mother, Gayle Ridderbusch of Tillamook. And now, as the tenth anniversary of the murder approaches, she has one powerful admonition:

"If you believe your child or loved one is in a potentially violent situation or being stalked, you must take it very seriously. You must move heaven and earth to get them out of it."

See STALKER, Page 3



Bilingual advocate Norma Obrist works primarily with Spanish-speaking clients

Stepping up Latino outreach efforts

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 2,300 or 9 percent of the population of Tillamook County is of Hispanic or Latino origin, an 84 percent increase since 2000.

Reaching out to that growing population, however, is not always easy, particularly in the case of those who may be experiencing domestic or sexual violence in their lives.

"We know we need to focus more energy on reaching out to our Latino community," noted TCWRC Executive Director Kathleen Marvin. "So this year, we are putting extra emphasis on finding ways to do that."

At the front lines of this effort is TCWRC Bilingual Advocate, Norma Obrist.

Obrist, who was born in California but raised in the Mexican state of Sonora,

'When you're already going through a hard situation, there are extra barriers for someone who does not speak the language.'

*- Norma Obrist
Bilingual Advocate*

moved to Tillamook County to live with her aunt in Cloverdale when she was 14. She attended Nestucca High School for a while, then graduated from Tillamook High School. She and her husband, dairyman Todd Obrist, have three boys, ages 8, 6 and 1 and live in Tillamook.

Obrist joined the TCWRC staff in 2007.

"The most important

thing to me is to be able to help people, especially if I can help them change their lives for the better," said Obrist.

The challenges faced by many Spanish-speaking women, particularly those who may be undocumented, can be daunting, she explained.

"One of the issues that I see a lot is the language. When you're already going through a hard situation like domestic violence or sexual assault, there are extra barriers for someone who does not speak the language. There's even more fear about their immigration status, the fear of making a police report because you feel like, instead of getting the help you need, you might get arrested. In addition, many times, the husbands control

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Planning with HEART

By Kathleen Marvin
TCWRC Executive Director

The coming year will bring many exciting opportunities and challenges for Tillamook County Women's Resource Center.

As you will see in a related story in this newsletter, we have been honored to receive a renewal of our grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women.

While this three-year grant will allow us to work on new ways to expand and improve our services to the community, we also know that funding will continue to be a challenge as we look into the future. We know we must strive to find ways to leverage our existing staff, work more closely with our community partners and find ways to become even more self-sustaining.

TCWRC is committed to securing our organization's long-term financial stability and we believe planned gifts are an important piece of that.

For this reason, our board has been hard at work developing a framework for a comprehensive planned giving program.

In January, we will meet to finalize our planned giving and gift acceptance policies. We are setting up meetings with financial planners to ensure that we have qualified experts to assist our donors in achieving their charitable giving goals and provide them with the maximum potential benefits.

Our planned giving program will be called HEART (an acronym for Helping



Through Empowerment, Advocacy, Resources and Training).

In the early stages, our efforts may include house parties at which people can learn more about the options and benefits of planned giving.

We are still working on our overall endowment goals, but we do have one minimum figure to reach. We know we must raise at least \$25,000 to qualify to have Oregon Community Foundation manage the endowment for us.

One thing we hope will help us make a dent in that is a commitment from one of our donors who has promised to match the first \$5,000 in planned gifts we receive!

Developing a planned giving program is serious business, but it also is essential to the long-term health of our program. We look forward to sharing more details of our plan as we finalize it.

In the meantime, we are grateful for your ongoing support and contributions. Our work would not be possible without them.

All of us at Tillamook County Women's Resource Center wish you a joyous holiday and a peaceful and prosperous new year.

Things you should know about the crime of stalking

Stalking is a dangerous crime that affects 6.6 million U.S. adults each year. It is a series of actions that make you feel afraid or in danger. It is often violent, and can escalate over time.

A stalker can be someone you know well or not at all. Most have dated or been involved with the people they stalk.

Some things stalkers do:

- Repeatedly call you, including hang-ups.
 - Follow you and show up wherever you are.
 - Send unwanted gifts, letters, cards, or e-mails.
 - Damage your home, car, or other property.
 - Monitor your phone calls or computer use.
 - Use technology, like hidden cameras or global positioning systems (GPS), to track where you go.
 - Drive by or hang out at your home, school, or work.
 - Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets.
 - Find out about you by using public records or on-line search services, hiring investigators, going through your garbage, or contacting friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers.
 - Other actions that control, track, or frighten you.
- Stalking is unpredictable and dangerous. No two stalking situations are alike. There are no guarantees that what works for one person will work for another, yet you can take steps to increase your safety.
- If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
 - Trust your instincts. Don't downplay the danger. If you feel you are unsafe, you probably are.
 - Take threats seriously. Danger generally is higher when the



stalker talks about suicide or murder, or when a victim tries to leave or end the relationship.

- Contact the Women's Resource Center. We can help you devise a safety plan, give you information about Oregon law, refer you to other services, and weigh options.
- Develop a safety plan, including things like changing your routine, arranging a place to stay, and having a friend or relative go places with you. Also, decide in advance what to do if the stalker shows up at your home, work, school, or somewhere else. Tell people how they can help you.
- Don't communicate with the stalker or respond to attempts to contact you.
- Keep evidence of the stalking. When the stalker follows you or contacts you, write down the time, date, and place. Keep e-mails, phone messages, letters or notes. Photograph anything of yours the stalker damages and any injuries the stalker causes.
- Ask witnesses to write down what they saw.
- Contact the police. Oregon has an anti-stalking law. The stalker may also have broken other laws by doing things like assaulting you or stealing or destroying your property.
- Consider getting a court restraining order.
- Tell family, friends, roommates and co-workers about the stalking and seek their support. Tell security staff at your job or school. Ask them to help watch out for your safety.

From the National Center for Victims of Crime

Stalker

From Page 1

Dion's story

Growing up in Tillamook County, Dion attended Nehalem School, then East Elementary, Tillamook Junior High School and Tillamook High School, where she also became a Rainbow Girl and lettered in track, swimming and dance.

As a senior at THS, Dion took college-level classes at Tillamook Bay Community College and won scholarships, despite being seriously dyslexic. Gayle said Dion's goal was to enter the medical field, so she headed off to OSU, where she took a double science major.

After graduating on the Dean's List, Dion applied to OHSU, and was one of 30 accepted out of 300 applicants. She earned a degree as a dental hygienist and went to work soon after.

As a student at OSU, Dion had entered the Oregon National Guard, rising to the rank of sergeant.

"It helped pay for her schooling and Dion loved the challenge," Gayle recalled.

Dion's unit was not deployed. Instead, she worked with other medical staff to prepare troop units for deployment, giving them vaccinations and taking care of their dental health.

"She really loved it," Gayle said. "Once or twice a year she would help 500 soldiers get ready to go."

Always athletic, Dion also was a body builder.

"She was so petite, they called her Mini Rambo," Gayle said.

The stalker

It was at her gym in Salem that Dion met another body-builder, Manuel Tovar, 31, a sanitation worker and former Marion County Sheriff's reserve deputy. They started dating in September of 2002. They had not been dating long when Dion



Dion Wilks, left, and mother Gayle Ridderbusch at Dion's induction into Rainbow Girls

told her mother that her new boyfriend was coming on too strong.

"She said he was just moving too fast. He would shower her with attention and gifts. He immediately wanted to marry her and he had started to become real controlling," Gayle recalled.

So Dion tried to break it off, but Tovar kept pursuing.

"He would stay at her door all night long," Gayle said. "One day, she called me from work and told me he was watching her through her office window. And she said she believed he was following her to and from work."

For a time, Dion relented and began seeing him again before finally breaking it off for good.

That's when things turned from bad to worse.

Gayle said Tovar began beating on Dion's doors and windows for hours at a time. Dion obtained a restraining order, but that didn't stop him. He would break into her apartment while she was at work and leave gifts — flowers, jewelry, even an engagement ring. So Dion got the locks changed, but Tovar continued. He bombarded her with hundreds of emails and voice

mail messages.

"She never told me she was afraid," Gayle said. "I offered to stay with her in Salem, but she was sure she could take care of this herself."

The last night

On Saturday evening, Feb. 1, 2003, Dion was in her apartment with one of her National Guard colleagues watching a movie.

"She and a few friends from her unit had just come back from a meeting and they all headed over to Dion's apartment," Gayle explained. Two of them went to get some beer and a third young man stayed behind with her to wait for them.

While Dion and her colleague were in the living room, Tovar broke into the south Salem apartment through Dion's bedroom window. He had with him the service revolver he had carried as a Sheriff's Department reservist.

Tovar made his way to the living room, where he brutally kicked Dion's friend in the head until he was unconscious. Then he forced Dion outside and into her Toyota Corolla. He made her drive while, it is believed, he

held the gun to her ribs. They headed for Interstate 5.

After the car entered the freeway, however, it went into the ditch near the Ankeny Hill exit.

"I believe that Dion purposefully wrecked the car in an effort to get away from him," Gayle explained.

What came next was horrific, Gayle said.

Reports at the time said police were not sure of the exact order of events. But they do know that sometime before or after the crash, Tovar shot Dion in the ribs. Then, as she was trying to escape from the car, he shot twice more. One shot hit her in the shoulder. The third hit her in the head and brought her down. As she fell, she was struck by a passing big-rig truck.

Her tragic struggle was over.

The following Thursday, Tovar's body floated to the surface in a pond just 300 yards from where Dion had died. He had ended his own life with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Gayle would later learn that Tovar had a history of stalking and terrorizing other women he had known.

Aftermath

Now, nearly a decade later, Gayle still relives the horror of the event.

"When I saw the officers at my front door that night, I instantly knew what had happened. They didn't need to tell me. I looked at them and said, 'Manny killed my daughter.'"

Gayle said she knows now how important it is to take stalking seriously.

"What I would tell any parent now is that, no matter what the cost or difficulty, get your loved one out of that situation as fast as you can.

"If I had known then what I know now, I would have found a way to move her out of state somehow. But it all happened so fast, we really didn't have time to evaluate the threat."

3-year federal grant will enhance outreach & training

This fall, TCWRC received another U.S. Department of Justice rural grant.

This three-year grant will allow us to build the capabilities of our existing staff and expand our outreach to underserved populations. What's more, it will allow us to assist our many community partners to do the same.

In the past few years, our program was able to achieve great things, in part, because of a previous rural grant. That grant, which expired Sept. 30, allowed us to undertake a major public awareness outreach program and to bring in additional staff to make that happen.

Among other things, our new grant will allow us to focus heavily on training our existing staff and other members of the local service community in helping clients deal with the powerful impact of emotional and physical trauma.

It also will help us expand our outreach to such underserved groups as Spanish speakers, teens and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

We will begin our new endeavor by first asking members of these communities what they think is important, what unmet needs they may have and how we can better connect with them.

We invite you to offer feedback or ideas that may help us better connect with and serve our community.

We Need Your Email Address

TCWRC produces a regular electronic newsletter and we would love to put you on the list to receive it. Please send your email address to Kandy Staples-Cooper at kandy@tcwrc.net.

Volunteer Profile

Marie Arellano

Years ago, Marie Arellano had just ended an abusive relationship when she met the man who would eventually become her husband.

"He had been in an abusive relationship, too," she explained. "He had been an abuser. But he wanted to change. He reflected on his life and decided to change."

So, when the couple and their five sons moved to Tillamook from Northern California four years ago to be close to Marie's mother, he encouraged Marie to connect with the Tillamook County Women's Resource Center.

"I wanted to learn more about domestic violence because I want to be sure that my sons learn how to have healthy relationships," Marie explained.

She took a domestic violence class and immediately volunteered to work for the agency. These days, she works one or two days a week helping out with mailings, special events and various other office duties.

"I've been very fortunate to have a husband who wanted to do better for himself and his children," she explained. "We have read materials about domestic violence and healthy relationships together. He is very supportive."

She said her work with the center has also helped her break old habits.

"For instance, in my old relationship, my



TCWRC Volunteer Marie Arellano

abuser would not allow me to have any friends, so I got in the habit of not having friends, that I didn't need them. But when I started at the center, I realized that I really do enjoy having women friends. I really enjoy the camaraderie of these wonderful women."

Marie, who also works part time as a home care aid, said she hopes to take more domestic violence classes and would eventually like to work with young women to help them learn the importance of healthy relationships.

"It is really important to help young people, because they are getting into relationships so early, now. They need to know how to have healthy ones."

Sexual assault response team

After long planning, the District Attorney's office, local law enforcement, medical practitioners and the Tillamook County Women's Resource Center are collaborating to form a sexual assault response team. The team's draft protocol is expected to be finalized Dec. 31. Under this protocol, TCWRC will be tasked with providing victim support services at Tillamook County General Hospital.

Trauma training

In March, TCWRC will be offering training for local professional service providers in how to recognize and treat the effects of trauma.

Recent research has revealed that traumatic events and violent experiences can have far-reaching effects on individuals. These effects can appear long after the precipitating events.

If you are interested in attending the workshop, contact Romy Carver at (503) 842-8294 or at romy@tcwrc.net.

Stalker workshop

January is National Stalking Awareness Month and we will be holding a training session in mid-January on how to identify and deal with stalkers. For information, contact Romy Carver at (503) 842-8294 or at romy@tcwrc.net.

New emails

The Women's Resource Center has new e-mail addresses, as follows:

Adrienne Allen – adrienne@tcwrc.net

Susan Bush – susan@tcwrc.net

Romy Carver – romy@tcwrc.net

Ma'at Crook – maat@tcwrc.net

Melissa Finnell – melissa@tcwrc.net

Mike Haynes – mike@tcwrc.net

Kathleen Marvin – kathleen@tcwrc.net

Norma Obrist – norma@tcwrc.net

Kandy Staples-Cooper – kandy@tcwrc.net or info@tcwrc.net

Eleanor Watkins – eleanor@tcwrc.net

New volunteer coordinator brings years of experience

Ma'at Crook will recruit and train new volunteers

For Ma'at (pronounced mah-ought) Crook, who joined the Women's Resource Center staff a few weeks ago as volunteer coordinator, helping victims of family violence and abuse is not just a career choice. It's a passion.

That passion came, in part, from her own life experience.

"I was molested by my biological father from childhood until I was 18," Crook said of her life growing up in North Carolina. "He also physically abused my mother and there was alcoholism in the family."

Crook, who eventually moved to California as an adult, said she spent many years coming to terms with those traumatic childhood years. She eventually visited the local domestic violence agency in San Diego, where she lived, and received counseling that began to help.

"If all you have seen in your life is abuse, you don't know what is healthy," she explained. "You don't magically develop healthy coping skills. Instead, you cope as best you can. Eventually I learned that my old cop-

ing skills were not helpful to me in my life.

"When I started getting help, I realized that the shame of what happened to me was my father's shame, not mine."

Crook told her counselor she wanted to share her story with others and staff people at the center were eager to have her do so. There was just one problem.

"I was extremely shy," Crook recalled. "I could not express myself or speak in front of groups. I had real problems communicating everything that was in my head."

So she began taking speech classes at a local junior college.

"I took every speech class they had," she said. "For nine years."

Crook became a member of the organization's speakers bureau, making presentations at schools, churches and civic groups. After five years of volunteering, she joined the staff for a decade as a prevention educator, then a volunteer trainer.

"I knew that I wanted to make this my career," she continued.

This year, she and husband Tyler Crook (the artist on the Dark Horse Comics' series B.P.R.D, a spinoff of Hellboy comics) decided to move to Oregon to be closer to his family.



Ma'at Crook joins TCWRC staff

They chose Bay City when Ma'at was hired by TCWRC.

Kathleen Marvin, TCWRC's executive director, said she is thrilled to have Crook, 40, join the team.

"She brings a depth of experience that will strengthen our training efforts," Marvin said. "She will help us update our training materials and she will be able to go out into the community to help us recruit more volunteers. We also hope we can join with other nonprofit partners to hold a volunteer fair."

Marvin noted that WRC Vol-

unteer Coordinator Eleanor Watkins will continue to coordinate the direct service volunteers, including those working on the hotline.

As a newcomer to Tillamook County, Crook said she is excited by the recreational opportunities here, as well. She loves to walk around Bay City, where she lives with her husband, dog and two cats, and to hike local trails. She also enjoys writing, drawing and creating comics.

"I love adventure and I love what I'm doing. I'm totally up for it," she concluded.

Obrist

From Page 1

them completely and won't let them out.

"We explain to all our clients that we do not make reports to immigration or to the police.

"I'm also now doing more to reach out to women at places they might go. For instance, I go into Mexican stores or restaurants. I talk to owners and let them know that we have services for their customers. They are very helpful and supportive."

Obrist said she distributes her

business card around the community to let people know she is available to them at any time.

"They know they can reach me, even on my days off. A lot of times, clients will approach me in the grocery store or places like that."

Obrist said a particularly helpful partner in her work has been Catholic Charities.

"They have a program to help victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. They can help with visas and work permits and with problems with their legal status.

"This kind of help destroys

the barrier that keeps a lot of Latino women from reporting. They don't have to stay where they are not safe if they have other options. This program gives them those options."

Obrist said she has been able to help 15 or 20 clients obtain legal visas since the program came to the county around 2009.

Obrist also helps clients with basic life situations that create barriers to them.

"If they can't speak or read English, I might help them fill out paperwork or make a doctor's appointment," she explained.

And Obrist is especially excited because she will be the bilingual person who takes part in the county's new sexual assault response team.

Marvin noted that Obrist also will lend her Spanish language skills to the translation of educational materials and forms for clients. And she will be working to recruit Spanish-speaking volunteers.

"Norma is a fabulous advocate," Marvin said. "She is knowledgeable and, above all, compassionate. We are so fortunate to have her on our team."

TCWRC 30th Anniversary Celebration

Sept. 25, 2012
Tillamook County Library



Executive Director
Kathleen Marvin



County
Commissioner
Mark Labhart



Rep. Deborah Boone & former
County Sheriff Todd Anderson



Sen. Betsy Johnson addresses the crowd

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Foundation Grants

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**Tillamook County
Women's Resource Center**

P.O. Box 187
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Client AdvocateSusan Bush
Administrative/Fiscal CoordinatorKandy Staples-Cooper
Bi-Lingual Advocate.....Norma Obrist
IPV AdvocateAdrenne Allen
Education & Outreach
Program Manager.....Romy Carver
Wild Flower Supervisor.....Melissa Finnell
Shelter ManagerJanet Stringer
Volunteer CoordinatorEleanor Watkins
Volunteer Trainer/Coordinator.....Ma'at Crook
Prevention Coordinator.....Terri Neimann

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