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Most local violence is domestic

by CHRIS ROGERS

Last summer at a house in Winona, a couple was arguing. Then it became more than an argument. The man grabbed the woman by her throat and squeezed. As she started losing consciousness, she screamed, and he let up, the woman later told police. Then he followed her down the street, pushed her down outside a gas station and started choking her again. Later, the man would choke her a third time, according to police reports. She survived; he was convicted.

It was a serious crime, but not a unique one. In 2017, there were 233 cases of domestic assault by strangulation filed in Winona County District Court. It was nearly as common as the 26 burglaries prosecuted that year. Two years ago, a Lewiston man also choked his girlfriend during an argument. She died that night. He was convicted of murder.

Bar fights and gun violence get more attention in local news, but the most common type of violent crime in Winona County is domestic. In an analysis of every criminal case filed in Winona County District Court in 2017 — more than 2,500 cases — the Winona Post found that domestic violence was not only the most common form of violent crime, but that the number of domestic violence cases outweighed all other violent crimes combined. Six out of every 10 violent crimes charged last year were cases of domestic violence. The data is based



Photo by Chris Rogers

In 2017, there were 142 domestic violence cases filed in Winona County District Court, compared to 99 cases of all other forms of violent crime combined. Winona County Attorney's Office Victim Services Coordinator Claire Exley held a scale weighted accordingly.

see **DOMESTIC** page 5a

After Central, what's next for sr. center?

by CHRIS ROGERS

Up until last Tuesday night, Winona city leaders had their eyes set on Central Elementary School as a potential future home of the city's senior center, or of its police and fire departments, or as a private development opportunity. Last Monday, city manager Steve Sarvi met with the City Council in closed session to give council members one last opportunity to adjust their offer. The council declined, and the city did not get its wish. Other prospective

buyers offered Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) more money with fewer strings attached, and the School Board chose their offer over the city's. What happens to the city's senior center planning efforts now?

"I wish them luck," Sarvi said of the school district leaders, adding, "That's their decision, we certainly respect their decision and we'll move on." In any case, Sarvi said, "We still have an issue with the current Friendship Center and its space."

see **CENTRAL** page 8a

Dairy expansion debate begins

by CHRIS ROGERS

It was a sea of blue at Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) informational meeting last week on the Daley Farms of Lewiston's proposal to expand their farm and more than

double the size of Winona County's largest dairy herd. Members of the Daley family were at the door of the Lewiston Community Center passing out scores of stickers and blue T-shirts that read, "I support all dairy." Daley Farms Chief Financial Officer Shelly

DePestel said, "We've got support." "This is not a factory farm, this is a family farm," Lewiston resident Jon Nienow stated. Nienow and others approached the microphone last

see **DAIRY** page 3a

First annual cultural fair brings Japan to Winona

by NATHANIEL NELSON

The Winona County History Center (WCHC) will be filled with the sights and smells of Japan next week, when Misato, Japan, ambassadors host the first annual Japanese Cultural Fair at the museum.

The event will take place on Saturday, October 27, at the WCHC from 9 a.m. until noon. Attendees will be able to test out their chopstick skills with snacks in the lobby, attend a green-tea ceremony, snap a photo in traditional kimonos and yukatas, learn Japanese calligraphy and ori-

gami as well as play various Japanese games. Each station will be used to help introduce Winona residents to the culture of the city's sister city in Japan, while acting as a fundraiser for the Winona International Friendship Association and the Winona County Historical Society (WCHS).

"[The fair] will be an open-house style event with various activities for the public to try and interact with this year's ambassadors from Misato, who are leading the activities," said Jennifer Weaver, educator at WCHS.

see **JAPAN** page 5a



Photo by Chris Rogers

Major donors to the new Winona Family YMCA building and project leaders broke ground on the new Y building last Thursday. Y officials said that contractors will begin site preparation work this fall and that construction will begin in earnest next April with the goal of opening a new Y by spring 2020.

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Japan

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“We are excited that more of the community get this opportunity to interact with members of the Misato community.”

In 1997, Winona and Misato began their relationship when Kagoto officials invited the town to join them as a sister city. According to Joseph Lepley, the leader in Winona of the Misato trips, the agreement states that the two cities will help promote art, culture, business and friendship between the two.

To help accomplish that, starting in 2003, several eighth through 10th grade students visit Misato each spring as part of an ambassador program, with students from Japan visiting the driftless area each October. What began as a Winona Area Public Schools program for 10 students has now expanded, and is open to all students in the Winona area with 25 ambassadors from eighth, ninth, and 10th grade sent overseas every year.

Lepley explained that while he was teaching at the middle school, the opportunity to be involved appeared and he decided to give it a try. “I was not as involved as I am now but it grew on me and I could see the value that it created for our students,” he said, adding that those who take on the ambassador trip experience something very few do at their age, learning about a larger world and a new culture.

“All the ambassadors and their families that have participated, on both sides of the ocean, would say that their lives have been impacted in a very, very positive way,” Lepley said, “because of the friendships, and because you do have to step outside of

your comfort zone to go to a country 6,000 miles away. You learn about yourself and come back somewhat changed with a more positive outlook on the future. I believe that passionately.”

For the past several years, Winona ambassadors have hosted a Winona Cultural Fair for the Misato students, with five stations teaching them about the culture of the Midwest.

“This is the first year we’re going to do the Misato Cultural Fair, and I think that goes to show our relationship between the two cities has grown and evolved. We’ve done the Winona Cultural Fair for the Misato residents for many years but now they’re bringing their culture so more Winona residents can get a taste of Japanese culture,” Lepley said.

In the past, these fairs were mostly for the ambassadors themselves, but with the new event, Weaver explained that getting the community involved will help foster friendship between citizens of the two cities, and hopefully help the relationship to continue growing in the future.

“I think people should go because people will be able to see how strong a bond we have with Misato, and they’ll be able to learn a little bit more about why it’s important for us to continue our sister-city relationship,” Lepley said.

The Japanese Cultural Fair will take place on October 27 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Winona County History Center at 160 Johnson Street in Winona. Tickets are \$4 for adults, \$2 for students and free for kids ages five and under, and can be purchased at the history center. For more information, call WCHC at 507-454-2723 or email Jennifer Weaver at educator@winonahistory.org.

Domestic

continued from page 1a

on case filings reported by the court.

“Your numbers don’t surprise me,” Winona County Attorney Karin Sonneman told the Post. “That’s kind of a statement about our world.”

“Those are just the ones that come to the attention of law enforcement and come into the criminal justice system,” Winona Women’s Resource Center (WRC) Executive Director Diana Miller said of the 142 cases of domestic violence charged in 2017. Research shows that only a third of domestic assaults are actually reported to police, she explained. Miller’s staff offers confidential help for people experiencing domestic violence, and in 2017, the WRC handled 750 cases of domestic violence — five times more than made it to court. Even more people do not seek help at all, she added.

The cases analyzed by the Post included adult criminal cases, not juvenile cases involving violence by minors. Domestic assault charges include instances of child abuse or other violence between any sort of family members. However, most of the cases analyzed by the Post involved violence between intimate partners. Sonneman reported that matches her experience: most domestic violence cases her office handles involve intimate partners.

The alleged offenders in last year’s domestic violence cases were not always men. Twenty-two women were charged with domestic violence crimes, but male subjects were behind the vast majority of cases: 120 out of 142.

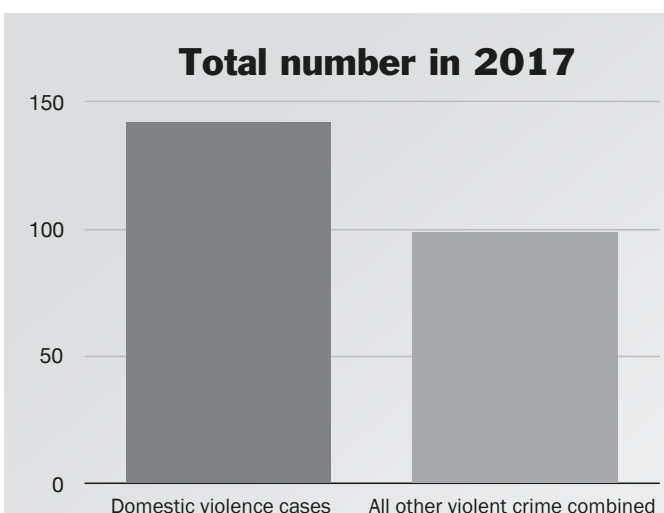
‘Not my fault’

“A large portion of it, I believe, stems back to insecurities,” Empower CTC Certified Domestic Violence Counselor Erin Parker said when asked why domestic violence is so prevalent. Parker has been leading group therapy sessions for abusive men for 13 years. Nearly all of her clients are ordered to participate by a judge. Sometimes men in the group are insecure because their wives make more money than they do and they don’t see themselves measuring up to traditional gender roles, Parker said. They think, “‘What is my purpose in this relationship? What is my purpose with her? With the kids?’” Parker explained. “Then I get scared of losing that, so I try to control more.”

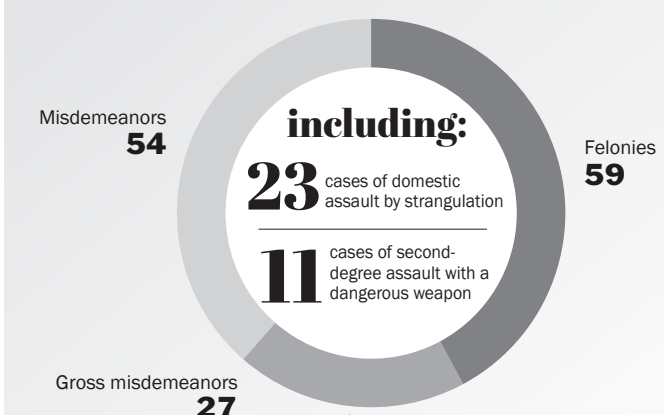
Many people who are convicted of domestic assault are required to complete a domestic violence counseling program. After Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center closed its Winona-based Counseling for Abusive Men program this spring, Rochester-based Empower CTC and Family Service Rochester were among the closest programs to Winona. Some offenders were unable to travel to Rochester, and this fall, Empower CTC opened a Winona branch that offers local domestic violence counseling. Parker said someone called her earlier this year and said, “I’ve got 20 guys waiting for group. Are you interested?”

Asked how the men in her program view their actions initially, Parker rattled off a list of excuses she hears all the time: “‘Not my fault.’ ‘I didn’t do it.’ ‘She pushed my buttons.’ ‘I told her not to.’ ... In their world, they were the victim because she called them a name or she didn’t do what he wanted or she was trying to leave.”

Domestic abuse is complicated, local experts told the Post. It is sophisticated. It is not just one moment of physical violence. “I get the cases when there’s an assault. There’s a lot of background and things that have led to that point,” Winona County Attorney’s Office Victim Services Coordinator Claire Exley said. “Violence doesn’t happen in a relationship without a whole bunch of other emotional and manipulative abuse tactics,”



How serious were domestic violence cases?



Miller stated.

Family Service Rochester Clinical Program Director Matt McKay uses the power and control wheel in group therapy sessions to get men to parse out that manipulation. The wheel is an illustration, part of the anti-domestic-violence program The Duluth Model, and it outlines controlling behavior, from gas lighting and name calling to controlling a partner’s access to threats to “minimizing, denying, and blaming.”

“One of our guys was saying, ‘My partner is always talking down to me, and I can only take so much and then I just blow up,’” McKay said, describing a recent group session. “I’ll say, ‘Hey guys, what part of the power and control wheel is he using?’ [They answer], ‘Well, he’s denying and minimizing,’” McKay explained. “It’s not just us that are calling them out. We allow the group process to do that.”

Getting the men in these programs to take responsibility for what they did is a huge hurdle, Parker stated. “There can be no permanent change until they can say, ‘I did this,’” she said. Some people never get there, but, she added, “After that moment comes, then there can be real growth.”

McKay said men in his program sometimes realize what they did after he shows them photographs of the injuries they caused their partners or children. They really did hit them that hard. Alternatively, he continued, “They hear themselves talking. We talk about verbal abuse. [I’ll ask], ‘Well, verbal abuse — what kind of verbal abuse?’ [They respond], ‘Well, I call her a b****. I call her a s****. I call her a w****.’ And they’re usually like, ‘Wow, is that what I sound like?’”

Asked why she believed domestic violence is so common, Sonneman pointed to poverty, childhood trauma, mental illness, and substance abuse. “When you have someone who is homeless or sleeping on someone’s couch, it leads to a lot of stress,” she stated. Exley echoed Sonneman’s comments about the impact of childhood experiences. “They have that kind of ingrained in them as adults that they think of this as normal behavior,” Exley said.

Many of the men who enter domestic violence counseling lack emotional vocabulary, McKay stated. “These guys don’t have a lot of feelings words,” he said. “In addition to ‘pissed off’ and ‘stressed,’ we want to add ‘irritated’ and ‘confused,’ ‘anxious.’ We want to add more vocabulary so they can understand what they’re feeling.” He explained, if they cannot put a name to how they are feeling, how can they process it?

“Part of it, too, is almost 90 percent of the guys in our group have been physically, emotionally, or verbally abused themselves. So it’s almost like, ‘Well, my mom never talked back to my dad.’ So when they’re in a relationship, they can’t figure out why their partner is talking back to them, and that’s just not right, and that’s their justification to be physically or emotionally abusive,” McKay stated. “No one ever teaches you healthy relationships,” Parker said. “No one ever teaches you what abuse is. So you just go off your family and friends and what you see in the media.” Not everyone has good role models.

What can be done?

“The cycle ends with the abuser,” Parker stated. McKay and Parker’s programs try to teach abusers better ways to deal with their emotions. “How do you recognize where you’re at, from a one to a 10, and when you’re a six, how do you stop?” McKay asked. “We really work on de-escalation skills so they can peel off.” Mark Hecht, board chair of the Winona-based Beyond Tough Guise, advised, “Slow down. Realize how you’re feeling, and what might be going into that, and think about how to deal with that.” There are other options, he added.

However, Parker is not overly sanguine about how effective counseling can be on its own. “Statistically, the research says the biggest deterrent to domestic abuse is jail, so there’s mixed reviews on whether treatment even works. But when the consequences are swift and sure, that makes it easier for treatment ... The first tactic we use is, ‘Do you want to go back to jail?’”

Asked what she thought could help, Parker responded, “If we want to see domestic violence change, we need to change our culture.”

“We have to have so much more than that [criminal justice response], starting way back with what kind of prevention efforts we put into education,” Miller said. Miller pointed to bystander intervention as one potential solution. She talked about how ordinary people can be there for survivors of abuse. “Really listen to the people that you’re with because sometimes it is communicated subtly,” Miller said. “Sometimes people experiencing domestic violence reach out to others, and they sort of test, ‘Is this person going to pick up on my isolation? Will they then respond as someone who will keep confidence ... someone I could trust to help me take a first step to make my life more safe?’”

For a survivor, making their life more safe may not mean leaving their abusive partner, Miller stressed. “When they

think about the totality of their life and their family, it’s not always that easy,” Miller stated. “Bystander intervention does not mean, ‘OK, there’s a problem here, I’ll just solve it,’” she explained. “You don’t need to know everything, and you shouldn’t presume to know what’s best ... Express that you care about that person and you want them to be healthy and happy.”

The WRC is one place for survivors to start. It gives survivors a place to talk confidentially about things that they cannot — for good reason — always share with friends or neighbors, Miller said. The WRC’s professional advocates help explain options and resources to people, but let them decide what is best for them. “This is a place they could start to process what’s happening to them, what they want to do within the constraints of what they can do, and start to formulate a plan,” Miller explained.

Beyond Tough Guise and the Winona County Primary Prevention Project hope that by raising children, especially boys, differently, they can change the culture they believe contributes to domestic violence. The two organizations partnered with the Winona Area Youth Soccer Association to launch the local Coaching for Change program that asks parents and coaches to pledge to be good role models and trains coaches on how to call out sexism at practice. “I think too often we’re not responsible for our behaviors,” Beyond Tough Guise Board member Mike Hanratty said. “Boys will be boys. We excuse that kind of behavior.” Parker stated, “One of the biggest factors that we need to change is men speaking out.”

Domestic violence is a big problem, and there is no silver bullet; it needs to be addressed from many angles, Miller said. “Culturally, if we can all just say, ‘Yes, it’s happening, and it’s happening to a lot of people.’ And when someone indicates that it’s happening to them, I will choose to believe them.” Not that you can solve it, but the believing and the validation goes a long way,” she stated.

On Monday, the Primary Prevention Project, the WRC, and Beyond Tough Guise are hosting a community conservation on respect and stopping sexual and domestic violence. The event will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Minnesota State College - Southeast’s auditorium, room 205, at 1250 Homer Road in Winona.

For more information about the WRC, visit www.wrcfwina.org, call 507-452-4440 during business hours, or contact the WRC’s 24-hour crisis line at 507-452-4453.

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Correction

In its October 17 edition, the Winona Post incorrectly reported the time of next week’s Madison Elementary School

reuse study. The city of Winona is hosting a public meeting on future uses of the school building starting at 4:30 p.m. — not 5 p.m. — on Thursday, October 25, at city hall.



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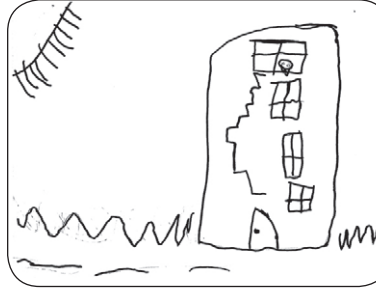
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