

October 2, 2025  
For Immediate Release

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## DA, Community Leaders Commit to Advance Healing and Hope for Survivors at Domestic Violence Awareness Event

San Diego County District Attorney, [Summer Stephan](#), joined the San Diego Domestic Violence Council, community leaders and other social service agencies to mark the beginning of Domestic Violence Awareness Month at a ceremony at SBCS (formerly South Bay Community Services) in Chula Vista today. The annual event is meant to bring together professionals, survivors, and community members to raise awareness about domestic violence (DV) and remember those whose lives were taken in DV incidents during the previous year. This year, the event theme was “Hope and Healing, Families for Change.” This is the first event of five, with events to occur in every region of the county throughout October.

In 2024, **seven** people were killed by a current or former intimate partner and there was **one** additional homicide victim, such as a family member, new boyfriend, or bystander, who died during domestic violence related incidents. While this is an increase from five DV homicides the prior year, overall DV homicides continue to remain lower than the average from the prior two decades.

**Attached is a list of domestic violence homicide victims whom officials promise will not be forgotten.** The San Diego Domestic Violence Council works with its community partners and law enforcement agencies, like the DA’s Office, to support victims in several ways.

“Domestic violence shatters lives, and no one is immune to its impact,” said **District Attorney Summer Stephan**. “To survivors, I want you to know you are not alone, and you do not have to live in fear—there are resources and people ready to stand with you. To those who choose to abuse, know this: we will hold you accountable. We are committed to breaking the cycle of generational violence. Our work does not stop in October; every day we are committed to preventing violence, delivering justice, and empowering survivors with the support they need to leave abuse behind and reclaim safe, dignified lives.”

Last year, there were 15,298 domestic violence calls for assistance made to law enforcement across San Diego County. The DA’s Office filed charges in 1,345 domestic violence cases in 2024.

**[One Safe Place: San Diego County Family Justice Centers](#)**, which are managed by the DA’s Office, provide resources and services all under one roof for anyone who has experienced abuse

or violence. Since opening the *One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center* in 2022, more than 9,000 people have been served in addition to their over 3,000 household members/dependents. This month, the DA's Office will open *One Safe Place: The South County Family Justice Center* in National City, making it easier for victims and survivors of crime to find services all under one roof closer to them in South Bay. Just like in San Marcos, this will be a safe and healing place where anyone can obtain vital services and resources.

During the event, which included a resource fair and a candlelight vigil ceremony honoring homicide victims, De Angelo Singh shared his personal story of losing his mother and cousin to domestic violence.

“Although their lives were taken by domestic violence, their voices live on through me, my siblings, and my mission to help others,” said **De Angelo Signh**. “We, as a community, must work together to help families seek help earlier, before the domestic violence becomes deadly.”

The San Diego Domestic Violence Council is a collaboration of organizations and community members who seek to reduce and prevent domestic violence. Partner agencies include the DA's Office, San Diego County Health and Human Services, the San Diego City Attorney's Office, the San Diego Sheriff's Office, and other law enforcement and social services agencies.

“Domestic violence is not a private issue, it is a community issue,” said **San Diego Domestic Violence Council President Analicia McKee-Chau**. “The effects of domestic violence echo through families, through generations – but healing is possible. Families can break cycles, survivors can rebuild, and children can unlearn the fear and grow into emotionally strong, loving adults. But it takes all of us, it takes community. This year's theme is an important one – families for change. Families for change means families who are not afraid to talk about hard things. It means providing our kids with the tools to recognize healthy relationships. It means friends checking in, neighbors speaking up, and systems that respond with compassion and no judgement. Today we are here to remind the families in our community that we are here for them, and help is available.”

“Domestic violence is a crime that shatters families and communities, but it is not one survivors have to face alone,” said **San Diego City Attorney Heather Ferbert**. “As your City Attorney, together with *Your Safe Place -- the San Diego Family Justice Center*, I am committed to ending the epidemic of domestic violence and promoting awareness of the comprehensive, free services available to people in our community experiencing relationship violence.

“As someone who has personally worked with victims of domestic violence, I've seen the damage it causes, including to the families,” said **Dr. Kimberly Giardina, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS)**. “It is important we use this month, and this occasion, to both remember the victims and recommit ourselves to a steady reduction in the number of cases and greater early support and services to prevent these tragedies from occurring.”

If you or someone you know is being abused by a current or former partner, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (1-800-799-7233) for confidential support and assistance planning for safety. More information and resources can be found [on the DA's website here](#).

The [DV Council](#) will host additional community events throughout October, which you can find [here](#).

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office**

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*

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## Not to Be Forgotten

### Intimate Partner Violence Homicide Victims (2024)

On January 6, 2024 **Brenda Valle (38)** was shot to death by her husband Jose Benjamin Valle (41) in their home in El Cajon. Jose subsequently died by suicide.

On April 16, 2024 **Ashley Margaret Bird (35)** was shot to death by her estranged husband Christopher Bird (39) in her home in Spring Valley. Christopher subsequently died by suicide in San Clemente.

On April 24, 2024 **Janai Patrice Johnson (31)** died of homicidal violence allegedly caused by her former dating partner Dennis Robinson (49) in City Heights, San Diego. Dennis later died in an unrelated homicide.

On May 26, 2024 **Claire Soulner (90)** was shot to death by her husband David Soulner (83) in their apartment in Santee. David subsequently died by suicide.

On July 30, 2024 **Beverly Lynn Slater-Sheehan (78)** was shot to death by her husband Michael Patrick Sheehan (74) in their apartment in Santee. Michael subsequently died by suicide.

On August 29, 2024 **Amanda Lynn Buchanan (44)** was set on fire by her ex-boyfriend Jose Carlos Villanueva (47) at her workplace in Chula Vista and died of her injuries. The prelim is scheduled for Jose for December 3, 2025.

On November 13, 2024 **Rachael Ortencia (31)** and **Jose Rodriguez Medina (39)** were shot to death by Rachael's former dating partner Christopher Kyle Farrell (26) in a parking lot in downtown San Diego. Christopher subsequently by suicide.

**\*Note: These descriptions are based on public information. Many of these cases have not completed the court process.**