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For Immediate Release

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DA, Community Leaders Empower Survivors at Domestic Violence Awareness Event

Intimate Partner Homicides Down 50% from Previous Year

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 in Balboa Park today. The annual event is meant to empower survivors, award those who work with victims and remember those whose lives were taken in domestic violence incidents during the previous year. This year, the event theme was “Empowering Survivors, Supporting Our Community Together to End Abuse.”

In 2023, there were five domestic violence homicide victims of which the suspect was a current or former intimate partner, a 50% decrease from the year before. That is the lowest number of DV homicides recorded in San Diego County in the past three 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 does not discriminate and does not know borders,” said District Attorney Summer Stephan. “Anyone who is living with any type of violence at home, especially intimate partner violence, needs to know they do not have to live this way. There are many resources and agencies available to help. This event is just one example of efforts that go beyond the month of October. Every day we are all fighting to prevent domestic violence, prosecute offenders and provide resources to empower victims so they can safely leave their abusers and lead a safe and dignified life.”

Last year, there were 16,666 domestic violence calls for assistance made to law enforcement across San Diego County. The DA’s Office filed charges in 1,892 domestic violence cases in 2023. Part of DA’s efforts to prevent domestic violence include coordinated trainings for hundreds of professionals across the county on recognizing the signs and symptoms of domestic violence, firearm safety, victim rights, stalking, and outreach and inclusion of diverse victim populations.

[One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center](#), which is managed by the DA’s Office, provides resources and services all under one roof for anyone who has experienced abuse or violence. Since opening in 2022, more than 6,000 victims have been helped. This year, the

DA's *One Safe Place* began a historic partnership with the Attorney General of the State Baja California, Mexico, and the State of Baja California Justice Center for Women in Tijuana to cross-refer victims and provide vital services on both sides of the border to further regionalize help and ensure they can get to a safe and healing place no matter where they live or work.

During the Balboa Park event, which included a resource fair and a candlelight vigil ceremony honoring homicide victims, Amy Vance, who is a survivor of domestic violence shared her personal story.

“The journey to empowerment for survivors has been a goal in my personal and professional life for over a decade,” said Vance, who has spent the last 13 years advocating for other survivors. **“For survivors of family violence and their families, it is critical to provide easily accessible, readily available shelter beds with supportive services including counseling, safety planning, workforce development, and a clear path back to a life without violence. Those services must include the input of individuals who have lived experience and understand the ripple effect of violence throughout the family, especially children. It is only through empowerment, healing, and time that the journey is successful.”**

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 a community issue, which requires community response,” said San Diego Domestic Violence Council President Dr. Vanessa Rodriguez. **“As a psychologist providing clinical care specializing in domestic violence and first responder treatment, I know first-hand the trauma and vicarious trauma caused by domestic violence. Over the past two decades in this field, I have also witnessed remarkable resilience, growth, empowerment, and collaboration among families and communities, which is why I love this year's theme. We made significant improvement this past year in saving lives, yet our work is far from over. I am confident that together we can build a more compassionate and just community where everyone feels safe and supported.”**

If you or someone you know is being abused by a current or former partner, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](https://www.nvhw.org/) (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.



Not to Be Forgotten

Intimate Partner Violence Homicide Victims (2023)

On June 22, 2023 **Denise Helen Orpinela (39)** was shot to death by her husband Eric Orpinela (42) in their trailer home in El Cajon. Eric died by suicide.

On June 23, 2023 **Kimberly Wynne Foster (34)** was shot to death by her boyfriend Dorian Deshawn Larkin (28) in their apartment in Oceanside. Dorian later died by suicide.

On October 27, 2023 **Shantia Marie Brown (31)** was stabbed to death by her dating partner Owerrie Davon Bacon Jr. (28) in a motel room in the Del Cerro neighborhood of San Diego. A mental competency hearing for Owerrie is scheduled for October.

On December 20, 2023 **Melissa Romero Domingo Soto (45)** and her estranged husband Johnny Richard Soto (52) went missing from the family home in San Ysidro. It was later determined Melissa had been strangled to death by Johnny and he died by suicide. Their bodies were found six days later in their vehicle in a Campo-area casino.

On December 26, 2023 **Angela Marie Lanway (42)** was stabbed to death by her dating partner Ziyah Jay Patterson (29) outdoors in San Marcos. The preliminary exam for this case is scheduled for November.

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