

*“Every two minutes a woman is sexually assaulted somewhere in America”*

*“More than one million women are stalked each year”*

*“Nearly one out of three murdered women die at the hands of an intimate partner”*

*“America is responding”*

**Narrator:** When Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act. The federal government made a commitment to improve the legal system's response to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Funding from VAWA is increasing women's safety at home and in their communities. It's also creating an environment where offenders are held accountable. Communities across the country are saying violence against women is a crime. Local courts and law enforcement are working with grassroots leaders to transform the legal system's response. Hundreds of thousands of women are finding support. Victim safety begins with reaching out in rural communities like Vermont. That can be difficult, but Vala has helped legal services programs reach out in a new way by bringing back an old tradition, the House call.

**Wynona I. Ward, Attorney, Have Justice Will Travel:** When I was still at Vermont Law School, I realized that after doing a project in the Orange County Court, the county where I grew up. I read 184 affidavits and I saw that women were being abused, threatened and beat, the same as my mother had been over 40 years ago. Many women were coming in, they were getting temporary relief from abuse orders, but they didn't come back to get the final order. And I said, why is this happening? What I realized when thinking about this was that a lot of these women live on isolated back roads in Vermont that become impassable by muddy spring thaw and heavy winter snows. A lot of them didn't have licenses or automobiles, they couldn't get to the court, some of them don't even have telephones. So, with Have Justice will Travel, what I do is provide in home consultations transportation and free legal representation for women who are victims of domestic violence. What I really like about this is I'm able to sit in their kitchens and talk with them in a language that they understand, and I can explain in detail what will happen in the courtroom.

**Connie – Survivor:** And that was a very comforting thought to know that I wasn't going to be on my own having to deal with legal issues. Not understanding legal issues that sometimes can prevent people, I believe from leaving.

**Narrator:** VAWA funds have made civil legal services more accessible. At the South Royalton Legal Clinic, attorneys supervise Vermont Law School students. Together, they represent battered women in civil cases. An increasing number of victims are served, and in the process, a new generation of lawyers learn about domestic violence.

**James C. May, Director, South Royalton Legal Clinic, Vermont Law School:** On the narrow technical side, the students gain a wonderful exposure to the nuts and bolts of the practice of law, particularly one branch of family law. They learn to interview their clients, to counsel them, to negotiate with opposing counsel, to draft pleadings, to develop evidence, to learn how to present that evidence in court. But in a more important and in a larger sense, it sensitizes the students to the realities of the lives of the victims of this abuse. Not all of our students will become legal aid lawyers. In fact, few will become legal aid lawyers for a variety of reasons. But what they bring from this experience is a heightened sensitivity and a caring about this area of the law. We hope that when they go from here, they will carry into their local practices, their organizations, their bar associations, a real desire to try to address this problem wherever they may be.

**Leroy E. Yoder, Attorney at Law:** Before I had the experience with the legal clinic, domestic violence was a surface issue. It was a social issue, but it was somebody else's issue. When I was through with a legal clinic, it was probably the saddest ending of my law school experience. It was something that I very much wanted to continue on with. It's a very rewarding feeling to actually help somebody who's reaching out to you get through this process.

**Connie – Survivor:** I don't see myself as a victim anymore and take offense when people refer to me as a victim, I'm a survivor and I've gotten out. That is the major difference, that I am not a victim any longer. I don't have someone who has control over me anymore. My level of self-confidence has definitely skyrocketed since then. I think I've been able to help other people as well and plan to help other people, one good deed deserves another, and I want to only be able to help other women as I have been helped.

**Narrator:** Helping victims become survivors begins with hearing them, listening to and learning from what they have to say. Often, access to services is a big obstacle for victims. Supporting their efforts to build a safe and independent life is not easy. Especially in places like Detroit where victims have little money and few resources.

**Sgt. Darrell McClendon, Investigator, Precinct #12, Domestic Violence Unit –Detroit:** A woman with a poor economic situation, they're basically stuck within their, their little environment. If the battery is basically running that environment, they have nowhere to turn. They can't get out of town. They have no money to get out of town, they have nowhere to turn to. We all play an integral part in the safety of this victim. Before we had nowhere that we could turn, I would have a victim say, well, what should I do? And my response is, I have no idea. I have no idea. But now I can tell them, I say, look, I got this place for you to go. We have these people you can talk to. I enjoy it. To me, I feel as though my job is worthwhile.

**Narrator:** Thanks to support from VAWA, communities like Detroit have been able to build a continuum of services, services that are necessary for a woman and her family to live free of violence at the Women's Justice Center. They've come a long way.

**Norma J. Tucker, Executive Director, Women's Justice Center/My Sister's Place:**

I came in 1995, and actually at that point, families who needed the services and who were residents of

the shelter actually had to turn around their lives and find housing and jobs and just everything that needed to be done within 30 days. It was unbelievable that families were expected to just start all over again within 30 days, now we're able to follow up. We've got staff that work with families through our funds. The VAWA funds have actually enlightened everyone, given that we're the partner with the victim now, and we're the partner that's going to help them to get through this very, very difficult time.

**Survivor I (Detroit):** Once I got into the program, they kind of just not handed everything to me, but showed me that there was some different avenues that I could take in getting business, taking care of, you know, right here, I didn't have to go out, you know, to file any paperwork for PPO's or anything else. It was right here with their arm's length and they're still continuously helping me do things.

**Staff – My Sister's Place, Detroit:** Since you got into transitional, have you set some goals for yourself, yet you did not have prior to arriving?

**Survivor I (Detroit):** Well, I'm not going to say that I didn't have prior to arriving, but it was just that I need to get some other things on order before I could go for with those calls. In school is my number one priority right now because it's okay to have a job. But I want something to say that it's going to be a career that no matter what state I go to or where I'm at, you know, I can get that particular job. I took a test for the Focus Hope program and did really well on the test. So I should be entering into that, hopefully sometime next month. And that's a machinist training program for the big three to get into the big three. So once I finish that training, I should be, you know, self-sufficient with a job that, you know, I don't have to go and ask anybody to give me this or give me that because I have it and I have some type of schooling. So I'll never be jobless again. Never.

**Narrator:** A continuum of support can really make a difference for victims. But that's not enough. We've got to hold offenders accountable for their actions. VAWA funds have enabled the state's attorney's office in Cook County, Illinois, to target cases where the danger is greatest.

**Richard Devine, State's Attorney of Cook County, Illinois:** Domestic violence may be a misdemeanor in the court room in many cases, but based on what we see, it often turns into that murder down the road if it's not handled right.

**Gil Broderick, Investigator, Domestic Violence Unit, Illinois:** TACs stands for Target Abuse Calls. And that is, we take the most serious cases out of all our domestic violence cases, which there's 50,000 of them a year. We wind up with approximately 2000 cases and we put them in the TAC team and the tack team consists of two prosecutors. We have four investigators. We work in teams, male, female teams, and we have two people from the advocates. And we have two court advocates. (driving with officer to DV call: where will we be going first? 1603, 16th floor? Yep. Defender in custody, placed under arrest on signed complaint after victim stated she was kicked and thrown on the floor after a verbal altercation, defendant placed in custody). You know, we have the very first contact with them, so the attorney is all write up attorney request form and they'll put on there, they might need a subpoena served or they might need a witness located. They might want you to go out and interview somebody or gather up some evidence so that's what we do. We go out and make that initial first contact with the victim. We come out to check on you, make sure you're all right. Yeah.

Great. Everything, you know when you first get there, they're leery. They're scared of you, they don't know what you want, you know. We let them know, hey, we're here to help you. You go up to the room, the people are going to come and get you. (Officer speaking to victim: "They're going to take you aside before you go to the judge or anything, and they're going to talk to you about everything they get. And these people will try to assist you so that you can make a good decision about what to do for the future"). And we explained the program to them. We give them a copy; each person gets a copy. We also have it in Spanish and Polish. You know, we do everything we can to get them into court and let them know we're there to help.

**Maura Slattery, Assistant State's Attorney, Deputy Supervisor, Domestic Violence Division:**

I think if you talk to any prosecutor, any police officer or advocate, one of the biggest hurdles that we all have trying to get that victim to one, come to court or participate in the criminal justice system

**Narrator:** It's clear that TAC is working for both victims and prosecutors. TAC has a 72% victim participation rate, compared to 20% for non-TAC cases. Since its implementation, TAC conviction rates have risen to 85%.

**Hon. Gloria Coco, Supervising Judge, Domestic Violence Court:** There's a number of assignments that judges can have in the Circuit Court of Cook County, in any jurisdiction where they preside in Cook County, but I've had a number of assignments, but this is the one assignment I have found that as a judge, you feel that you really can make a difference in people's lives.

**Narrator:** Prosecuting and even convicting offenders may not be enough to keep a woman safe. In Westchester County, New York, the courts work closely with the probation department to vigorously supervise offenders and protect victims.

**Honorable Daniel D. Angiolillo, Westchester County Domestic Violence Court, 9th Judicial District:**

In Westchester, we're very fortunate to have now a specialized court, specialized court that addresses domestic violence cases. When a Defendant is on probation from the domestic violence court, that Defendant is required to report to court. We refer to that as a compliance date, and they have to come to court every two months, three months, sometimes shorter, depending on the particular facts of that case. I will receive an overview from the probation officer and any recommendation on that compliance date as to how that probation officer feels the Defendant is doing, if they have any changes on the conditions of probation.

**Narrator:** With help from VAWA, the West Chester County Probation Department established a special unit that makes victim safety a priority.

**Rocco A. Pozzi, Commissioner, Department of Probation, Westchester County, New York:** The Probation Against Violence (PAV), which we call the PAV unit, was an attempt to take probation into a new dimension. Traditionally, probation has concerned itself with providing services to those who are placed under our control, the probationer, the batterer. The philosophy of the PAV unit is to make the victim our primary customer.

**Jerry Rauso, Probation Officer, Probation Against Violence Unit:** The Probation Against Violence Unit is comprised of a pre-sentence investigator, a probation officer who interviews and helps fill out a victim impact statement from the victim, and several supervision officers. What is unique is we

work together as a team because different officers are getting different information from different parties exclusively sometimes, and they're brought back together and like pieces of a puzzle, they sort of fit together, so you get the bigger picture of what's going on. (*Speaking to Barbara Delmerico, Pre-Sentence Investigator prior to leaving for call:*

*“We just wanted to know if there's anything we need to know about any weapons in the house, dogs or something that you came upon. Okay.” “He does have a pistol permit. Although there's no guns registered. The victim has never seen any weapons. Okay. But be careful when any way on that.”*

**Joseph F. Lhotan, Probation Officer, Probation Against Violence Unit:** The intent of our spending so much time and having so many contacts is to really stay on top of the case. These are probably the most volatile cases that you can have on probation.

**Daniella Usurin, Victim Resource Coordinator, Probation Against Violence Unit:** The community now has begun to realize that we are a great source of information, of referrals, of networking. We are part of the system.

**Narrator:** A commitment to protecting victims and holding offenders accountable means more than changing laws and practices. It means changing how we think about violence against women in Cash County, Utah, VAWA funds have helped challenge outdated stereotypes and mobilize an entire community. This has made a big difference to victims of sexual assault.

**Scott L. Wyatt, Cache County Attorney:** Well, back in 1994 in this county, there was a group of us that did some research because we were frustrated with what was happening with the prosecution in this area, and we discovered that for at least seven years, there had not been a single rape case filed, where the victim was an adult woman, and we decided that something had to be done about that. There were a group of police officers, a group of individuals who were involved in the shelter for women and others who all came together and said, we've got to change this. When we started, we were the worst anywhere. Glamour Magazine highlighted us as one of the worst offices in the whole country, and we had no resources to change that. We had vision, we had hope, we had a lot of goals, but we had no people to make those goals happen and to bring that vision around. When VAWA funded us with a victim advocate and a prosecutor, both, all of a sudden, we had resources, we were able to start educating the community, prosecuting the cases, and really moving forward.

**Rebekah F. Alpisa, Coordinator, Cache County Victim Services:** Before we were able to receive VAWA funding, women in the shelters and women who had been brutalized were told, quite frankly, by responding law enforcement officers, not to bother to even consider that there is going to be a prosecution of this case. Today, we have exponentially increased numbers of women who are reporting crimes to police because they know that they're going to be treated sensitively. They know that their needs will be met.

**Diane Crockett, RN, CEN, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE):** Now they have a whole team behind them that will take them through every step of the process. When we get the initial call that there has been a rape occur or an alleged rape occur, our central dispatch, where our police are, they will beep out the start nurse who's on call. They'll also beep out a victim's advocate. At the same time a

police officer or a detective will come. Usually, we'll meet at our clinic and sit down with the patient and through that joint effort, we'll get all the information we need from the victim that night. She'll have to tell our story one time and one time only. We collect the evidence and she's home in 2 hours. It just makes it much nicer.

**Narrator:** Cash County's approach is working. In the years prior to VAWA, no adult sexual assault cases were filed, but all that has changed. In 1999 alone, 65 sexual assault cases were filed in Cash County.

**Donald G. Linton, Chief Deputy Prosecutor, Cache County Attorney:** We've developed the cases. We see more cases coming in because people trust us. I think people understand that we're going to take the cases seriously, that we're going to work very diligently, and the county has put its resources behind our prosecutions. (speaking to a Jury) *"I'm here now to ask you to do what you swore you would do at the beginning of this trial, that to decide these facts fairly and to decide them honestly. If you analyze these facts fairly and if you analyze them honestly, you know first of all that both of them can't be telling the truth. Second of all, that she is telling the truth)."*

**Scott L. Wyatt, Cache County Attorney:** A trial is nothing more than an education. We're just trying to educate defendants, and we're trying to educate juries. And we're trying to educate the public that if you engage in this activity, you're going to prison, because we don't stand for it. This isn't really a prosecution of one case after the next, after the next, this is a community revolution. This is an awakening. This is saying you cannot rape women in our county even if you know them, even if you're married to them. We don't stand for that.

**Narrator:** A community revolution requires vision, leadership, and most of all, a commitment from the entire community. Ending violence against women begins with a recognition that this is not a woman's problem, it's everyone's problem.

**Ashley Walker, Director, Department of Human Resources, City of San Diego:** I always have seen myself as an ardent and perhaps radical feminist and having to deal with the issue of domestic violence and rape. We always, in the beginning dealt with it as a woman's issue. It was really a radical shift to talk about dealing with a problem, not as a woman's issue or a woman's concern or a woman's problem that we had to fight all the systems to change, but as a community problem and when we did that, we began then sharing the problem. Seeing it not as just a concern of ours but seeing it as a concern for everyone in the community and approaching people in a different way, not in an accusatory way, but to talk about this problem that we as a community had, how it belonged to all of us, how it impacted our children, starting to see men also as part of this whole process. And then to be able to share it so that everyone could see that we all had a stake in its outcome.

**Casey Gwinn, San Diego City Attorney:** If you look at where we were in 1985 and where we are today, the difference is dramatic. We've gone from a jurisdiction that had 26% of our homicides being domestic violence related, now to less than 5% of our homicides being domestic violence related. And that shift has been dramatic. It hasn't just been the criminal justice system; it's been the criminal justice system in partnership with the entire community. And it's been the criminal justice system listening to battered women's advocates and shelter advocates as to what we should be doing and then doing what they say. We started with prosecutors, and police officers and advocates, and then it was the medical

profession, and then it was the civil attorneys, and then it was the paramedics, and it was the pastors, and then it was Animal Abuse Professionals. Eventually, late for us, it was Child Abuse Professionals. It was slowly expanding that circle so that we just kept adding people.

**Gael B. Strack, Assistant Chief Attorney, President, San Diego Domestic Violence Council:** In San Diego, we have the San Diego Domestic Violence Council. We are a grassroots organization made up of 600 individuals, over 200 organizations, and about 17 active committees. We've been able to reach out to different communities that normally we would not have worked with in the past. Like the gay and lesbian community, we have strong partnerships with them. We were also able to launch into the area of elder abuse before and without funds, we weren't able to do that. We had to focus on the bulk of the work. But now we've been able to develop partnerships.

**Casey Gwinn, San Diego City Attorney:** VAWA had a profound impact on us because VAWA came into place at a time where we were organized at the grassroots level. We had the relationships, we had the beginnings, we had the protocols, but we didn't have the resources doing domestic violence work right is resource intensive. VAWA allowed us to put the money at the front end. Here we are six years later, domestic violence homicides are down dramatically, and we know that it's because the resources were provided to do the job.

**Narrator:** The passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994 set in motion extraordinary changes. There's no doubt that today women communities are safer. There is much to be proud of, but there's still work to be done.

**Scott L. Wyatt, Cache County Attorney:** They're out there, thousands and thousands of victims out there, waiting for someone to hear them and find justice for them. If I'm anything as a prosecutor, I'm a messenger. The message that I have is that you don't commit serious crimes, you don't assault women, you don't exercise power and control over people that are smaller or weaker than you, or that you think that you can manipulate. 1994, nobody was sending a message that this was an inappropriate activity. Today, it's clear.

**Norma J. Tucker, Executive Director, Women's Justice Center/My Sister's Place:** We are more comfortable in working with our residents or our victims around solving their domestic violence issue through the courts and with the police department. There's no adversarial relationship there anymore. It's a team there. We learn from each other. That's been very good. The VAWA money has been just everything on this problem has been everything.

**Casey Gwinn, San Diego City Attorney:** If we don't commit ourselves to keep moving forward, we'll never see progress. The hope of it all is there is progress evident. When you look at jurisdictions that have done this, right, that have worked at it and worked at it, you see incredible success. You see lives saved. You see families turned around. You see violence stopping. You see homicides going down. You see those kinds of things in jurisdictions that do it right, small or large. We know that we can make a difference. We know that it costs money, but we also know that once we spend the money and commit ourselves to it for the long haul, that we're seeing benefits for generations to come.

## SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS – Leadership, Commitment & Change

This program is dedicated to the survivors and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking whose courage, strength, and commitment to these issues have inspired and informed us all.

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