

## **DENVER POST**

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### **Advocates for domestic violence victims: Stand up to battery**

Reminder comes after shooting death of ex-Fort Collins woman in Seattle

By JASON KOSENA

After Monday's tragic news of a former Fort Collins woman being shot to death in Seattle in what appeared to be a murder-suicide sparked by domestic violence and a similar shooting Tuesday in the CNN building in Atlanta, local advocates are reminding people to stand up against battery.

"If we hear at a cocktail party that somebody is abusing their partner or putting them down, there is often a lot of silence in that room," said Victoria Lutz, executive director of Crossroads Safehouse in Fort Collins. "Until we as a society are very vocal and until we refuse to be very silent - because we know silence is taken as a sign of support by the batterer - we will continue to be a part of the problem instead of a part of the solution."

In Seattle, Rebecca Griego, 25, a Rocky Mountain High School graduate, and her ex-boyfriend, who she had a court-issued restraining order against, were both found dead in a University of Washington campus building Monday.

Police believe Griego's ex-boyfriend, Jonathan Rowan, 41, first killed Griego before taking his own life.

For many women, the court-mandated restraining order is enough to keep estranged stalkers away, Lutz said.

"There have been some studies done that show permanent protection orders deter violence in 85 percent of the domestic violence cases," Lutz said. "For the other 15 percent, the outcome can sometimes be tragic, as seen in Seattle this week."

Domestic violence is the No. 1 health problem for American women, according to numbers compiled by Project Safeguard, a nonprofit organization that aims to help battered women.

Annually, more women are victims of domestic violence than burglary, mugging and all other physical crimes combined.

Often, women who are in domestic violence situations struggle to leave because they are made to feel that life would be impossible to live without the batterer.

Difficulty notwithstanding, Lutz said there are options and resources available to women in Fort Collins who are looking to get out of an abusive relationship.

"Talk to a friend, talk to somebody at work or a relative or somebody at church," Lutz said. "Talk to somebody who you don't believe will judge you and just keep talking until you have answers that will allow you to be as happy as you can be."

Crossroads has 24-hour support lines and a weekday open house where people can come to get support, Lutz said.

For people who believe they may know of a family that is dealing with domestic violence, Lutz said the best way to help is to stand up and express your concerns.

"One of the things we can do is become proactive," Lutz said. "There has to be a discourse that we have to get comfortable with because it's hard to stand up. Yet we have learned to do it in terms of putting down racist language and behavior and other (socially unacceptable) actions."