

Program offers help for victims of crime

By Steve Lyon
The Humboldt Sun

WINNEMUCCA — As part of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office and Winnemucca Domestic Violence Services have joined efforts to inform victims of crime about their rights.

They will offer a presentation Wednesday evening from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the convention center in Winnemucca.

An important part of that is compensation for victims of crime, said JoAnn Casalez, director of Winnemucca Domestic Violence Services.

She said the state of Nevada is trying to raise awareness about the Victims of Crime Program, which many may not know exists. VOCP can assist eligible victims with a variety of expenses that occur because of violent crime.

WDVS receives funding to assist with the compensation program in Humboldt County. It's one of the many services that fall under the WDVS umbrella.

The VOCP can help victims and their families with expenses for crimes such as assault, sexual assault, domestic violence, physical abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, homicide, drunk driving or other violent acts. The VOCP can reimburse crime-related expenses that are not covered by other sources up to \$35,000.

Casalez said victims of crime sometimes don't seek medical treatment because they don't have insurance. The victim compensation program helps pay so victims are not burdened financially. The VOCP may help pay for hospital and ambulance bills, medical bills, counseling, emergency shelter and relocation costs, eyeglass replacement, pre-

scription medication and other expenses.

The fees and fines offenders pay through the court system fund the victims' compensation program, and no tax dollars are used.

"It's something we want the community to be aware of, that there's another resource available to them," Casalez said.

The requirements to apply for VOCP include:

- The crime must be reported to the police, child protective services or other law enforcement agency within five days of the crime, unless the victim is physically or mentally unable to file within five days.
- The application must be submitted to the VOCP within a year of the crime or within a reasonable time where the victim is unable to apply within one year.
- Victims must cooperate with law enforcement during the investigation and prosecution of the crime. Also, a victim cannot have participated in or been involved in committing the crime.
- The victim must be a U.S. citizen or legally entitled to reside in the U.S.

In 1984, while former President Ronald Reagan was in office, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) was passed and established the Crime Victims Fund from federal criminal fines and penalties to support state victim compensation and service programs.

Each state receives money to compensate eligible victims of violent crime. Nevada has a website where forms are located and can be downloaded and filled out.

Casalez said WDVS has received the training to help victims with the paperwork and the organization is handling about five claims per month.

AWARENESS

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and wearing jeans to work on Denim Day has become a way to show support for the victims of sexual assault.

Winnemucca Domestic Violence Services is sponsoring Denim Day in Winnemucca and Humboldt County as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month during April.

WDVS Director JoAnn Casalez said any business that wants to display a pair of jeans with empowering slogans written on them can call her office. There are also Denim Day pins to wear on Wednesday that WDVS can provide.

The theme of this year's national Denim Day is "Rape is a crime. Talking about it isn't."

The message Casalez hopes to get out during Denim Day and Sexual Assault Awareness Month is that there is never any excuse for sexual violence, and it's never the survivor's fault.

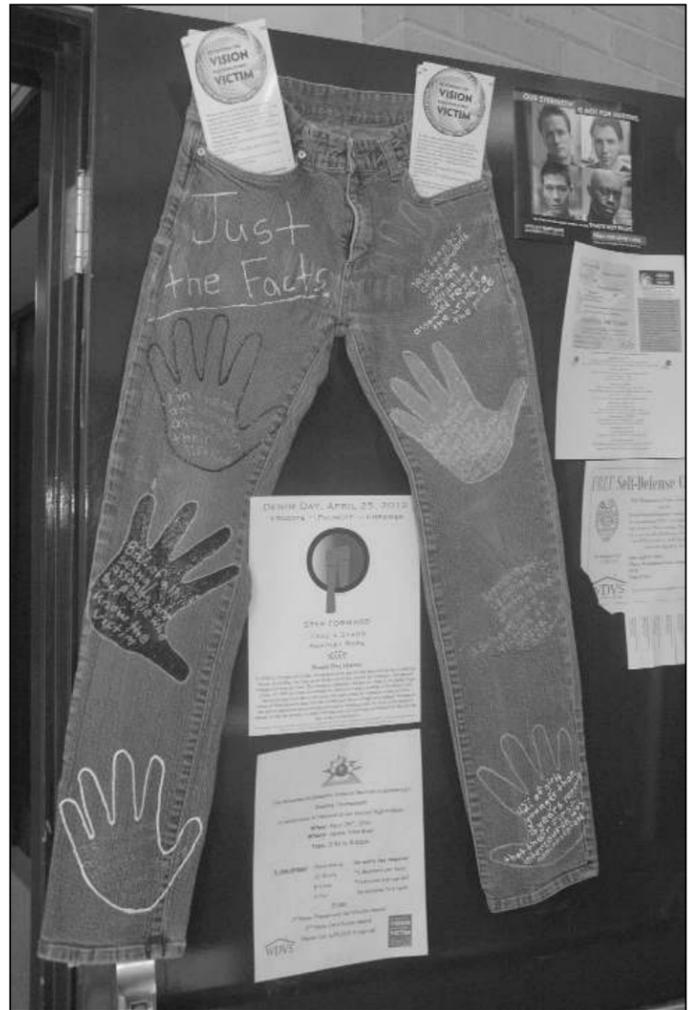
"We hope that the impact brings people to realize and recognize that no matter how a person is dressed, what they're wearing, what their behavior is, nothing at all makes it OK to rape," she said. "The victim never ever deserves it no matter what."

WDVS provides numerous services to victims, or survivors, she says, of sexual assault and domestic violence. The services are crucial in a state with the dubious distinction of being No. 1 in the nation for domestic violence-related homicides and domestic violence issues. Nevada has been No. 1 four out of the last five years, Casalez said.

In 2011, WDVS assisted 124 women, 10 men and 141 children in Humboldt County. The 124 women were victims of either domestic violence or sexual violence.

From Jan. 1 through April 16 of this year, WDVS has seen 46 new clients, and six of those individuals were sexual assault victims.

From 2009 to Dec. 31 of 2011, WDVS saw a 36 percent increase



STEVE LYON • The Humboldt Sun

Wednesday is Denim Day in Winnemucca and across the nation. The day is devoted to raising awareness of sexual assault and rape. Local organizers have placed denim jeans around town with empowering messages of support and concern for victims.

in the number of women who have come forward to seek services, which Casalez attributes in part to more referrals.

"Those numbers are kind of staggering. We feel generally that's kind of the tip of the iceberg," she said.

Casalez said she does about eight presentations a month on WDVS programs and other issues. The result has been more referrals from people who know someone who was a victim of sexual or domestic violence.

WDVS is community-based and anyone who needs help from the agency does not have to contact law enforcement first. WDVS can provide immediate help to victims of domestic or sexual violence, including an emergency shelter. Victims also have the option to be relocated.

"Sometimes the people don't want to stay in Winnemucca. Their support system is elsewhere and we

pay to relocate them. And if they need more than the emergency sheltering, we have long-term sheltering and transitional housing available," Casalez said.

WDVS works closely with law enforcement on domestic violence and sexual assault calls. The agency has advocates available to work with and offer support to victims 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also have safety packages and overnight bags for victims of abuse.

Casalez said WDVS works to take care of the victims' needs and help them achieve independence and empowerment. Law enforcement and the district attorney's office are responsible for the criminal prosecution, she said.

To provide those services WDVS has a budget for fiscal year 2012 of \$254,000, which comes mostly from grants. Private sources in the local community contribute about \$60,000 of that amount.

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Record temperatures reported over weekend

Sun Staff Report

WINNEMUCCA — Even though the calendar is nearing the end of April, Winnemucca received a dose of summer last weekend with two record-high temperatures, according to the National Weather Service.

The high on Saturday reached 85 degrees at Winnemucca Municipal Airport, breaking the old record of 83 set in 2009. Sunday's high topped off at 90, breaking the old mark of 84, also set in 2009. In addition, the high of 90 tied the all-time record for April that was originally set on April 30, 1981.

The record temperatures gave way to thunderstorms on Sunday night that lit up the sky.

Another record high was predicted for Monday. The National Weather Service is forecasting cooler and wetter weather toward the end of the week, with highs in the 50's.

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