

UTAH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL – PRESS RELEASE

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Domestic violence related deaths devastating

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(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Each year domestic violence takes a terrible toll in Utah, and 2008 was no exception. To date there have been 22 domestic violence related deaths, beginning with the fatal shooting of a young mother of two on January 6. As Kristy Ragsdale exited her car with her mother in a church parking lot, Kristy's estranged husband, Mark Ragsdale, appeared without warning, shooting Kristy in the back using a semiautomatic weapon. Others nearby, including two small children, witnessed the fatal assault.

The tragic loss of loved ones due to domestic violence affects not only the victim and perpetrator but extended families, neighborhoods, and communities. This year's fatalities included: 9 cohabitant homicides, 3 perpetrator suicides, 1 dating relationship homicide, 3 domestic violence related homicides, 2 domestic violence related suicides, and 4 domestic violence related deaths. Guns were used in 15 of the 22 fatalities.

Victims ranged in age from one year old to 80 years old. According to a police investigation, Tracie Williamson and her ten year old daughter, Linzie, as well as one year old, Jessica Perez, were shot multiple times by Peter Perez. Perez apparently then died of a single, self inflicted gunshot wound. Tracie's family tried many times to get help for her, however, Tracie may have been too terrified by Perez to accept.

It is crucial to recognize that domestic violence occurs in all communities, without respect to income, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual preference, age or disability. Domestic violence adversely affects all of society

and must be met with zero tolerance. Recognize risk factors: controlling behaviors, physical violence that increases in frequency and severity, threats with weapons or threats against someone's life, attempted strangulation, forced sex, threats of suicide, violence against children or animals, and violence outside the home.

“Domestic violence is no respecter of age or background,” according to Caron Withers, Chair of the Utah Domestic Violence Council, “so to increase public awareness, information on domestic violence related deaths is collected from public sources and continuously updated by the Utah Domestic Violence Council.” The full 2008 Domestic Violence Related Death list and other domestic violence-related information are available on the Utah Domestic Violence Council website located at www.udvc.org.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, tell someone. **For immediate help call 9-1-1.** If you decide to leave a violent relationship, do not threaten to leave, as this may escalate the situation. Call the Utah Domestic Violence Link-Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465) for help. You can be referred to an advocate who will help you create a safety plan and help find shelter for you and your children. If you are an abuser, there is also help available for you through the Link-Line. All calls are confidential and could save lives. Remember, there's no excuse for abuse. Make domestic violence intolerable in your community. End domestic violence by breaking the silence. Ask for help. Accept help.