

In October of 2003, the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence turned five years old! In the agency's last five years, staff members have worked in every state in the U.S., except one: Massachusetts. The team has also worked internationally -- in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Italy, Germany, Japan, and South Korea. The work has included conferences (on subjects ranging from law enforcement, to services for women, to expert witnesses), trainings, technical assistance site visits, strategic planning, consulting, facilitation and logistical support for meetings, and networking and planning events.

"When Sarah [Buel] and I met to form Tucker, Buel, and Associates," comments Executive Director Deborah Tucker, "we talked about how training and consulting were



National Center staff at the original office, 2002

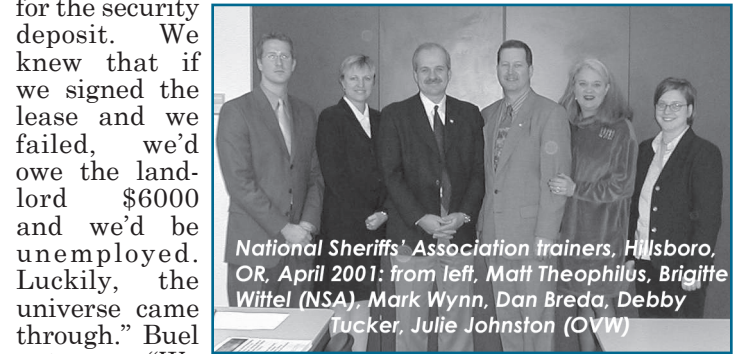
desperately needed and we had the idea that we might at some point establish a nonprofit agency. It was very important to both of us to look at domestic violence and sexual assault and especially at the intersection of these two problems. We knew that when we made the transition to a nonprofit, we wanted to focus on all forms of violence against women." Comments Board Member and University of Texas at Austin law professor Buel, "There seemed to be a gap -- there wasn't anyone providing, from a grass-roots perspective, the kind of guidance that we thought we could help people with. Also, we were very, very interested

in technical assistance; people told us they needed more than a conference or lecture. They wanted brainstorming that was specific to their community."

In May of 1998, the agency's articles of incorporation were approved by the Texas Secretary of State's Office; found-

ing board members included Rhonda Gerson, as chair; Sarah Buel, as vice-chair; Toby Myers, as secretary; and Gail Parr, as treasurer. Says Buel, "It was such a gift to be able to work with people we liked and whose work is incredible."

In October of 1998, the agency opened its doors after receiving grants from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and the Texas Department of Human Services. "From the very beginning," Tucker remembers, "[then Associate Director] Pat Cole and I knew that this was going to be a huge risk -- we didn't know if what we wanted to do would be agreed upon by the universe. We found our first tiny office the summer before we opened. We looked deep into each other's eyes and came up with \$500 each for the security deposit. We knew that if we signed the lease and we failed, we'd owe the landlord \$6000 and we'd be unemployed. Luckily, the universe came through." Buel notes, "We were blown away by how supportive activists around the country were when we were starting out."



National Sheriffs' Association trainers, Hillsboro, OR, April 2001: from left, Matt Theophilus, Brigitte Wittel (NSA), Mark Wynn, Dan Breda, Debby Tucker, Julie Johnston (OVW)

In December of 1998, the longstanding partnership with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center began, and in early 1999, a fruitful partnership began with the National Sheriffs' Association.

In 2001, the Center began training law enforcement officers on their response to sexual assault with the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement and Tucker began her three-year term as co-chair of the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence. "The Department of Defense work was a big surprise -- I knew we'd be working as advocates trying to improve military responses and policies around domestic and sexual violence, but I never thought we'd have an opportunity to make a contribution to so many people -- if all goes as planned, the recommendations of the Task Force should affect hundreds of thousands of military families," says Tucker.

2001 was also a challenging year for the National Center. In August, our dear friend and founding



Small group work at a Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) class in Thibodaux, LA, June 2003

We're 5 years old!

Associate Director, Pat Cole, passed away after a brief battle with cancer. Cole worked extensively in the poverty, welfare, and substance abuse arenas and was acutely aware of the multiple needs of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. She was committed to reaching women in nontraditional settings and in non-traditional ways. Reeling from this loss, we hosted the *Creating Individualized Services for Women: Responding to Multiple Needs of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Mental Health Concerns, and Substance Abuse* conference, from September 10-12. This event was Cole's brainchild, and her passion was a driving force in its development.



Delia Ruiz, the late Sheila Wellstone, and Debby Tucker, January 2002

On September 11, as the conference was unfolding, the tragedies in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania unfolded. Like others around the country, our solace consisted of staying close to one another, holding ourselves and each other together. The law enforcement conference we held in December of that year was a success, but we saw a dramatic decrease in participants as compared with previous years. Understandably, people didn't want to be away from home or traveling. This sentiment, combined with the downturn in the economy and fewer dollars available for training, caused us to decide against hosting further conferences and prodded us in other directions.

The National Center began to explore new possibilities. "As time passed and the Center staff grew," comments founding Board member Gerson, "requests for different services came in and we began to look at all the different things we could do. Debby is a visionary; if she sees something that needs to

be done, she wants to do it." At the end of 2002, the agency was awarded the TAPS (Technical Assistance Providers Support) grant by OVW to support the work of organizations all over the country, and in the spring of 2003, the agency dropped the word "training" from its name in order to better reflect its focus.



A National Center conference in December, 2001: from left, presenter Michael LaRiviere, National Center Board Member Toby Myers, and the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement's Mira Frosolono

In addition to providing services, the National Center also maintains two significant information resources. The first

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A Herstory in Numbers

Upon celebrating our fifth birthday (October 1, 1998 through September 30, 2003), the National Center had accomplished the following ...

- Presented at **43** weeklong *Domestic Violence Train-the-Trainer* or *COPS Domestic Violence* law enforcement training programs with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
- Presented at **37** two-day *Domestic Violence: Intervention and Investigation* law enforcement training programs with the National Sheriffs' Association
- Presented at **5** sexual assault trainings for management-level officers (lieutenants, sheriffs, and chiefs of police) and investigators with the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement
- Conducted **31** technical assistance and problem-solving site visits to local communities
- Conducted **65** customized trainings on a wide variety of topics for diverse audiences for organizations nationwide
- Presented **43** trainings (primarily in Texas and national conferences) on welfare, poverty, and low-income issues and how these intersect with domestic violence
- Participated in **39** networking meetings with organizations across the country
- Participated in **33** planning meetings or peer review panels
- Consulted with **26** communities and organizations across the country on strategic planning and organizational development
- Sponsored **7** conferences of our own in Austin, Texas
- Attended **20** professional development trainings
- Provided logistical support for **32** meetings for the TAPS project
- Participated in **26** meetings, hearings, site visits, and trainings for the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence. Executive Director Debby Tucker served for the life of the Task Force (three years) as the peer-appointed civilian Co-Chair. She and the National Center continue to support and work for the realization of the hundreds of recommendations made by Task Force experts.

5 Years Old, *cont'd from previous page*

is its library -- under the guidance of staff librarian Nancy Flanakin, the agency has built this resource to include over 4,300 catalogued items (and growing!). The library started with a few boxes, bags, and piles of materials collected by Tucker and Buel during their far-flung travels. As the activities of the organization expanded, Flanakin was hired to create a subject list and database for the collection. Flanakin uses the library collection and her research prowess to respond to several technical assistance requests each week from people around the U.S.

The second resource is the agency's Web site (ncdsv.org), which was completely overhauled in 2003. Today, ncdsv.org is a far cry from the basic, volunteer-designed site the agency began with five years ago. The new site features clean graphic design and vibrant colors, and the content was redone; new sections were added for law enforcement training, publications, news of interest, a variety of links, news, resources, and more. Since the site is a resource for violence against women issues, it's constantly updated with new and timely materials, reports, articles, and information. In May of last year, ncdsv.org had 53,000 visits; by the end of September of 2003, that number had risen to more than 84,000.

Recent projects at the National Center include training 911 dispatchers and call-takers to better respond to domestic violence emergencies (see p. 2), and developing and presenting a groundbreaking one-week train-the-trainer program for anti-violence organizations in Mexico. The Mexico training addressed the needs of those

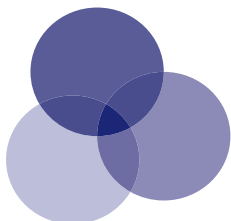


starting or expanding shelters for victims of domestic and sexual violence in that country.

Providing customized trainings has also been an important component throughout the history of the agency (starting with Tucker, Buel and Associates). We have presented trainings for the past five years at the annual National College of District Attorneys domestic violence conference; delivered keynote speeches for state coalitions and local service providers; designed and coordinated multi-day conferences for state agencies; trained hundreds of TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) workers and supervisors across Texas; and presented day-long seminars and workshops on a wide array of topics. In addition, the National Center has consulted with numerous communities on their response to domestic violence. In 2000, Tucker facilitated a 10-month strategic planning effort for three agencies in Lincoln, NE: the Lincoln Family Violence Council, Friendship Home, and the Rape Crisis/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center.

The agency's work has grown from an early focus on conferences and training to encompass much more! Is this where the agency expected to be in 2004? "It's amazing that within five years, the five cents and the two employees have grown to an agency of 16 staff with an approximate budget of \$1 million annually and a notable reputation nationally," says Gerson. Myers agrees, saying, "I have very high expectations of Debby, so the incredible progress has been what I've expected!" And Buel sums up by saying that the progress has been "mind-boggling, incredible, a true testament to Debby's skill and credibility and reputation throughout the country. I know of no other national program that's been able to pull as much together in this period of time -- one of Debby's incredible skills is knowing how to pull the right people together and motivate them and make things happen."

Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence members in January 2003: from left, Maj. General Thomas Fiscus, Michael P. LaRiviere, Catherine Pierce, Robert Stein II (DTFDV Executive Director), Diane Stuart (OVW), Judge Peter Macdonald, Debby Tucker (DTFDV co-chair), and Lt. General Garry L. Parks (DTFDV co-chair)



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 on Domestic and Sexual Violence
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