



The Tennessee Volunteer

Spring 1999

Newsletter Articles

[Professor Brutally Beaten: Rebounds with \\$20,000 Grant to Fight Violence Against Women](#)

By Adriane Stewart

[Orders of Protection Detailed](#)

By Deborah A. Yeomans

[LOOKING AT THE CLIENT, NOT JUST THE LEGAL PROBLEM](#)

By Neil McBride

[VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS ARE PART OF NETWORK OF SERVICE PROVIDERS: YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALL](#)

By Jacqueline B. Dixon

["Why don't battered women just leave?" Are We Asking the Wrong Question?](#)

By Kathy England Walsh

[Children: The Powerless and unprotected victims of domestic violence](#)

[Jackson/Madison County Domestic Violence Conference Groups Tackle Domestic Violence Together](#)

By Linda Seely

Spring creeps in slowly where I live now, imperceptibly even, as late-March snow occupies more space in my neighbor's garden than the purple hints of crocuses. I think, sometimes, that this is fitting. For even if I could see daffodils emerging from the grey drifts of snow, I would no longer be able to mark this changing of the seasons by the budding of flowers and trees, as I did once, when I lived in Tennessee.

The first weekend of spring is now, in my world, the anniversary of a brutal assault that left me with a fractured eye socket, severe facial trauma, chipped teeth, closed head injuries, broken and sprained toes, neck and back injuries, and cuts and bruises over most of my body. I have trouble thinking of flowers now as I look into the mirror at the whites of eyes that are no longer white but instead permanently discolored from the force of an assailant's fists, which smashed one of my contact lenses out of my eye (fragments of the other I extracted from way back beneath my lid many hours later, after I was released from the hospital).

In the two years that have passed since Nashville engineer Ronald B. Merville Jr., beat me unconscious in a deserted spot off I-40 that I still can't locate, I have often wondered whether I could have foreseen, and hence avoided, the attack. Two psychologists and a crisis counselor have told me no; the man who had claimed he wanted a friendship with me if we couldn't have a romantic relationship — someone with whom I had never argued — had me trapped in his car before he ever exhibited any signs of potential violence. And then it was too late. I did what I could, the psychologists and counselor have told me.

But I couldn't leave it at that. Although I still do not — and I am grateful for this — have a clear recollection of everything that happened that night, the Domestic Violence Division of the Metro Police Department and the District Attorney's office worked hard to prosecute Merville, and he was indicted by a grand jury five months after the attack. Two months later, he pled guilty to aggravated assault, admitting in open court that he had indeed committed the felony with which he was charged. He received three years probation and an expungeable record.

I still couldn't leave it at that. Encouraged by friends and family, I decided to pursue a civil suit. In the course of the negotiations that occupied the next several months, Merville's attorney relentlessly attacked my credibility and integrity, even suggesting that because his client was upset earlier in the evening I bore responsibility for the assault because I did not exit the scene before the violence occurred. By the logic of this defense, any upset man is always just a few steps away from aggravated assault, and he is not responsible for his own actions. I chose not to believe that and I held my ground insisting on my own terms.

We reached an out-of-court settlement some 15 months after the assault. I hoped to feel a sense of closure. I did not.

And so I couldn't leave it at that. As I reflected on my experiences, I realized that I actually was quite lucky. Not just because, as the detective in my case pointed out, my marathon training may have saved my life, and certainly contributed to my ability to drag myself out of the ditch and back to the road once the beating had stopped and I had regained consciousness. And not just because, while earning my Ph.D. in English at Vanderbilt University, I had become interested in women's issues and knew enough about the facts of domestic violence not to blame myself for what had happened to me. And not just because most of my physical injuries are no longer visible and psychological trauma continues to fade. But, I was lucky because I had support from my family, friends, and community — people who worked with me and for me to take my case through the criminal justice system and then into the civil courts. Today I count among my personal friends my attorneys, Phil Elbert and Trey Harwell of the Nashville firm Neal & Harwell, as well as many others whom I met as a result of the assault.

It is with the hope that other victims of gender-motivated crimes can also find the support they need that I have made a donation in the amount of \$20,000 to the Tennessee Task Force Against Domestic Violence. This money will help establish a legal expenses fund to assist victims of domestic violence who seek to prosecute assailants. Even as this fund is set up, though, I realize that this still will not provide me with closure. For we can never be sure all the consequences of our actions; I only know that certain situations in which I have found myself have been unacceptable, and that I have had to do something to change them. Over the past two years, I have never had a clear plan as my case has proceeded through the legal system; instead, I have worked step-by-step, testing new options and exploring new avenues as they have presented themselves. Not having a concrete plan with carefully defined goals and guaranteed results has always unsettled me.

Yet feminist philosopher Liz Grosz would point out that it is precisely this unpredictability — this space and time in which the unanticipated occurs — that is the stuff of political change. I do not know, then, what my donation and this legal expense fund can accomplish. But I hope that it is a step toward changing the

institutions that often ignore and sometimes even excuse and condone domestic violence and gender-motivated crimes.

Adriane Stewart is associate professor of English and Women's Studies at Allegheny College.

An order of protection is an order of the court issued to protect the victim from domestic abuse. The order of protection enjoins the abuser from coming about the victim for any purpose, and specifically, from abusing, threatening to abuse, or committing any acts of violence upon the victim. The order of protection may also include the awarding of temporary custody, temporary visitation rights, temporary child support, and temporary shelter to the victim.

An order of protection is available to anyone who is subjected to or threatened with domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is defined as inflicting or attempting to inflict physical injury on an adult or minor by other than accidental means, placing an adult or minor in fear of physical harm, physical restraint or malicious damage to the personal property of the abused party. An order of protection is available to victims who are defined as:

1. Adults or minors who are current or former spouses,
2. Adults and/or minors who lived together or who have lived together,
3. Adults or minors who are dating, have dated, or have had a sexual relationship,
4. Adults or minors who are related by blood or adoption,
5. Adults or minors who are related or were formerly related by marriage,
6. Adults or minor children of a person in one of the above stated relationships

The victim in need of an order of protection must file a petition for an order of protection with the clerk's office. The clerk's office is responsible for providing the forms necessary to seek an order of protection. Any person filing a petition for an order of protection shall not be required to pay any filing fees, litigation taxes, or any other costs associated with the filing, issuance, or enforcement of the order of protection.

At the time of the filing of the ex parte order of protection, the petitioner must specifically state in the order what has happened to make the petitioner seek the order of protection. At this time, the petitioner must also state in the ex parte order what other relief the petitioner is seeking, such as temporary child support or temporary custody. The ex parte order must be approved by the court. The order may be approved by judges, judicial commissioners, magistrates and other officials with the authority to issue an arrest warrant. The ex parte order, once approved, must then be served on the respondent. A hearing shall be held on the merits of the order of protection within 15 days of service of the order of protection on the respondent. The ex parte order of protection enjoins the respondent from abusing, threatening to abuse, or committing acts of violence upon the petitioner.

At the order of protection hearing, the petitioner and respondent may represent themselves, but in the past few years, representation of the parties, especially the respondent, has increased. Attorney representation increases the opportunity for a victim of domestic violence to obtain necessary relief, such as temporary custody and temporary child support. Oftentimes victims of domestic violence who have made the decision to leave their abuser fear for the safety of their children. The abuser knows that if they obtain custody or take the children before there is a custody order, it is very likely the victim will come back to the abuser. Without a temporary custody order the victim lives in fear of children being taken by the abuser.

Child support is also an important issue that needs to be addressed at the order of protection hearing. Oftentimes when the victim leaves the abusive situation, the victim does not have money for rent, food, etc. As a result, without a temporary child support order, the victim may be forced to return to the abuser because of lack of financial means to support the children.

Attorneys are needed to handle these difficult issues for the victim, especially when the abuser appears in court with an attorney to argue against the relief sought or to request temporary custody. When the victim obtains an order of protection restraining the abuser from coming about the victim, giving the victim temporary custody, temporary child support and temporary housing it makes it easier for the victim to make the decision not to return to the abuser.

If, after the hearing, the petitioner has proved the allegations of domestic abuse by preponderance of the evidence, the court will issue the order of protection. The court, in their discretion, may make decisions on the custody, child support, visitation and housing issues. The order of protection must then be served on the abuser. All orders of protection are effective for a fixed period of time, not to exceed one year. At the expiration of the order of protection, the victim may petition the court to extend the order of protection for a definite period of time, not to exceed an additional year. Pursuant to statute, if the court, after the hearing, awards the order of protection, then the petitioner's court costs and attorney's fees shall be assessed against the respondent.

Deborah A. Yoemans is an attorney with Legal Services of Upper East Tennessee, who represents victims of domestic violence.

When a victim of abuse asks for a divorce as a step toward getting a way from her abuser, she needs a divorce. Our system of delivering legal services ought to be able to provide her one. Generally, in Tennessee and throughout the nation, those who provide civil legal services to low-income people have done a good job of meeting this specific need.

But if you look at the victim and her family, rather than the legal problem, another need becomes apparent. To remove herself from the abuser and stay independent and safe, the victim needs, among other things, stability. Without stability, the granting of the divorce or protective order is like fixing one hole in a bucket that has two or three big holes.

It is psychologically challenging for any victim to remove herself from an abusive situation. When the victim is wondering whether she will be able to get into public housing, or lose her car, or be evicted, or keep her emotionally-troubled child in school, or get counseling or health care for her child, it will be much more difficult for her to break away and stay away from her abuser.

In response to this recognition, Rural Legal Services of Tennessee initiated Project Independence. Four attorneys, funded by the national AmeriCorps/VISTA program and the Tennessee Bar Foundation, are committed to find and resolve a whole range of legal problems that interfere with a victim's ability to stay independent.

They work closely with local spouse abuse shelters. When a victim enters a shelter, the project finds a way to meet the immediate need for a divorce or protective order. Soon after the victim is stable, the attorneys conduct a thorough "legal check-up" on the client, to identify other legal problems that might affect the family's stability. Using an eight-page list of potential issues (and skipping over those issues that obviously do not relate to each client), the attorneys search for apparent problems (i.e., notice of eviction or repossession) and problems that the client may not recognize as involving legal rights.

For example, if you ask a group of single women with children if they have problems with TennCare (Tennessee's managed care Medicaid program), they will often say no. But if you ask if their children have had trouble getting dental care, the response will be something like, "Well, what do you expect, we are poor and cannot afford dental care." In fact, federal and state law and the contract between the state and TennCare providers give children very powerful rights to dental care. A mother whose child goes to bed at

night with a painfully abscessed tooth is going to have a difficult time finding the energy to break and keep away from an abuser.

RLST's "Project Independence" has helped clients get health care for their children, avoid eviction, negotiate unpaid bills for utility services and rent, and has resolved many other issues that would have destabilized the family and discouraged a move toward independence.

The Project has made a special commitment to helping victims receive the mental health diagnosis and counseling to which they are entitled under TennCare. When children experience or even witness abuse, the psychological consequences can be overwhelming.

RLST's project has worked with four and six-year-old children who were suicidal, who were assaulting their mothers and siblings, or who were deeply withdrawn into tight shells — children who needed aggressive legal assistance to get mental health diagnosis and treatment. Without this kind of treatment, and hope for improvement, even the strongest victim of abuse will have difficulty finding the strength to stay independent.

In the same way, the legal check-up often reveals that clients are not participating as effectively as they should in other state and federal benefit programs, such as Families First. Many low-income families have dropped out of Families First — and the vital educational, training and health care benefits that come with it — because of misunderstandings or their failure to question unreasonable demands. Qualifying for Families First, and getting an appropriate plan under that program, can be a major step toward independence for a victim.

By looking at the whole client, the Project has been able to address not just one part of the problem, but all the problems that need to be resolved in order to have a real impact on the client's life.

The author is director of Rural Legal Services of Tennessee. Those who are interested in details about Project Independence or in a copy of the checklist may call 423-483-8454 or write P.O. Box 5209, Oak Ridge, TN 37831

A couple of years ago, I attended a series of meetings in Nashville on domestic violence. The meetings brought together representatives of various local agencies working to end domestic violence. I asked the assembled group what the Bar could do to help with the problem. The overwhelming response was, "Get attorneys to take more pro bono divorce cases."

This led to a discussion on recruiting and retaining pro bono attorneys to handle divorce cases involving domestic violence. We talked about how working with a client who has been a victim of domestic violence can be very rewarding when the client is assisted to make a much-needed break from an abusive situation and move on with her life. However, the group acknowledged that such work can be very challenging to the volunteer attorney when the client cannot seem to make the break and/or has such a myriad of other problems that she constantly monopolizes the volunteer attorney's time or that of the volunteer's staff. Unfortunately, the latter is the perception many attorneys have of a typical pro bono domestic violence divorce client.

A goal of the Tennessee Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee in the coming year will be to recruit and retain more volunteer attorneys to handle divorces where domestic violence is an issue. A key to recruiting volunteers, especially those who do not routinely practice in the domestic relations area, is offering training to give volunteers the ability to handle a pro bono domestic matter competently. This training will include presentations by well-respected attorneys from the private bar who make their living practicing in the domestic relations area. Attorneys of this caliber should attract volunteers to attend a training. The training

will also include written materials and forms for use by the pro bono attorneys.

It is essential that any training for volunteer attorneys also include information on understanding victims of domestic violence and resources available for victims. Often, there are many psychological and emotional issues involved with these clients as well as issues involving basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. Attorneys should be able to provide their clients with information about local resources for assistance beyond the scope of what the attorney can provide: phone numbers of the local domestic violence hotline, support groups, domestic violence units of the local police department, counseling, shelter programs and social welfare agencies. For example, many of these clients come from relationships where substance abuse and/or addiction is a problem. Al-Anon, a 12-step program for family members and friends of alcoholics and addicts, offers support and self-help free of cost, and meetings are available at a variety of locations and times.

Referring a client to a shelter, advocacy program, support group or children's program can limit the attorney's involvement to working solely on the legal problems of the client. Support groups, counseling and self-help groups can all empower the client to feel more positive about the changes she is attempting to make in her life and give her the courage to move forward.

When volunteer attorneys know these options are available to clients, it helps the attorney realize that he or she does not have to be everything to a client, and frees the volunteer's time to focus on the client's legal problems. Furthermore, it may encourage volunteer attorneys to know that they are part of a large network of service providers who are working to stop the cycle of domestic violence. This could help resolve the issue of burnout that is so common in attorneys dealing with pro bono domestic relations matters, especially those involving domestic violence.

Perhaps even more important than training, is providing a source the volunteer can turn to when they encounter difficult and unfamiliar issues in their pro bono cases. It should be encouraging to volunteer attorneys to know that if a problem arises in their pro bono case, they can turn to either a more experienced member of the private bar or a Legal Services attorney for advice and support. I have always felt that I could call someone at Nashville Legal Aid if I had a question about how best to proceed. We need to make certain that all volunteer attorneys feel comfortable in asking for such help.

Plans are underway for a statewide project to provide training and to encourage more pro bono attorneys to take domestic relations cases involving domestic violence. These trainings will be held in cooperation with various legal services groups and domestic violence shelters. The goal will be to assist in recruiting and retaining pro bono attorneys, partly by making them aware of a number of other resources that can work in tandem with their free legal help, to break the cycle of domestic violence, which is far too prevalent in our society.

Jacqueline B. Dixon is a lawyer with the Nashville firm of Hollins, Wagster & Yarbrough PC, and is chair of the TBA Pro Bono Committee.

When I began working with battered women over fifteen years ago, I thought I had a pretty good understanding of domestic violence. After all, I had worked in other crisis intervention programs, read most of the current literature, and had experienced violence myself in an intimate relationship. What I soon discovered, is that I had a lot to learn and that survivors of domestic violence were my best teachers.

As director of a rural shelter, one of the first women I worked with had been stabbed twice by her estranged husband and held hostage for several days. She escaped from the home when he left to buy cigarettes. After receiving medical treatment, I accompanied the woman to the clerk's office to file an order of protection. I will never forget the response of the clerk to her request, he said, "Why should I give you this order? You'll just

be back at home in bed with him by tomorrow." When we talked to the assistant district attorney about criminal charges, he told us that her husband could not be charged with attempted murder because he didn't stab her in a vital organ. Her husband pled guilty to a misdemeanor assault and was placed on six months probation. A short time later, I learned that he had stabbed his new girl friend.

I will also never forget the woman who found the courage to leave her abusive husband after many years of marriage. She and her children came to the shelter and I helped her develop a plan to find a job and housing. I remember being so proud of myself the day the woman and her children left the shelter and moved into a place of their own. Several months later, the woman came back to the shelter to tell me that she had decided to return to her husband. When I asked her why, she began to weep and told me how difficult it had been trying to make ends meet with a minimum wage job. She described the pain and guilt she felt when she ran out of food and had to put her children to bed hungry.

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to travel around the state providing training for police officers, judges, health care practitioners, educators and social service providers. One of the questions I am asked most often is why don't battered women just leave? Somehow the blame for perpetrator's violence has been placed on the victim. Not once has anyone ever asked me why does he batter?

I believe that there are two reasons why someone chooses to batter their partner. The first reason they batter is because it works. Violence and threats of violence are effective behavior modification tools. If you are in fear for your life, you will say or do anything to survive. Batterers use violence as a means of gaining and maintaining power and control over their victims. The second reason they batter is because they can. Domestic violence has historically been treated differently than other crimes. Up until recently, police officers were taught to mediate domestic violence cases and only arrest when there was serious bodily injury. District Attorneys have been hesitant to prosecute and judges reluctant to convict in cases where the victim refuses to testify. With no consequence for the behavior, batterers have been given little incentive to change.

Why do some battered women stay in abusive relationships? Most often they stay out of fear. Seventy-five percent of domestic homicides occur when the victim is in the process of leaving or has left the abuser. The most dangerous time for a domestic violence victim may be when she is seeking an order of protection or filing for divorce. Other fears expressed by victims include:

- a. Fear that he will hurt the children.
- b. Fear that he will take the children away from her.
- c. Fear that he will hurt other family members.
- d. Fear that they cannot financially support themselves or their children.
- e. Fear of being blamed for the violence.
- f. Fear of being alone.
- g. Fear of the unknown.

Fear is also the reason that domestic violence victims don't always act the way we think they should. They may lie to the police, recant their story in court, or refuse to testify. They may drop charges or stop a divorce proceeding. They may even return to their abuser.

If we want to stop domestic violence in our communities, we have to start asking the right questions. How can we provide protection and support to victims once they have left their abusers? How can we hold batterers accountable for their behavior? What steps can we take to end violence in this generation?

Kathy England Walsh is the executive director of the Tennessee Task Force Against Domestic Violence.

Domestic violence is a pervasive and debilitating problem in the United States today. Conservative estimates

indicate that it is present in a third of all marriages. Battering is the number one cause of injury to women in this country – above automobile accidents, medical malpractice injuries and work related injuries. Recently, as a result of widespread media attention and even governmental hearings, the plight of battered women has become an important issue. Although this new recognition of the problems faced by battered women has resulted in several benefits to women such as emergency shelter and police programs, little has been done toward helping the children who live with battered women. They are the powerless and unprotected victims of domestic violence, suffering at the hands of those who are supposed to nurture them.

The majority of children who live in violent homes witness the violence. Research indicates that up to 87 percent of the children in violent homes witness the violence. In fact, some fathers even arrange for their child to witness the violence. The number of children estimated to witness domestic violence is between 3.3 and 10 million.

Common sense tells us that children who witness domestic violence are terrorized and traumatized by it. We all know from our own childhoods that the ways our parents related directly impacted our self, our value system, and even our own relationships. The home is supposed to be a place of acceptance and quiet refuge for children, an environment in which they can prepare themselves for the extraordinary demands of adulthood. In a home poisoned by domestic violence, children are unable to focus on growth but instead must worry about the safety and well being of themselves and their mothers. For anyone who doubts the effects of hearing constant conflict between parents or witnessing the beating of a parent, these effects have been analogized to the effects child abuse has on children. The effects have been well established. Just as with abused children, children who witness domestic violence live in a home plagued by violence. Both groups of children live in constant fear that the screaming or beating will begin again. Thus it has been said that “for all intents and purposes, (children who witness domestic violence) are exposed to the same emotional milieu as the battered child.”

To understand the weight of the problem, one only needs to recognize that our country is as strong tomorrow as our children are today. If one does not accept this proposition, there are practical reasons for preventing children from witnessing domestic violence. The wake of harm created by domestic violence in terms of medical and psychiatric treatment, welfare and criminal behavior costs society dearly by draining public funds. Society pays for the harm created by domestic violence. The tragic problem of children witnessing spousal abuse must therefore be given top priority on our social and political agenda. This historically has not happened probably because of the inability of children to champion their cause and a reluctance by others to advocate on their behalf. In short, “battered women and children need a legal system which accepts their terrifying reality.”

For as long as a man is violent towards others, the adverse effects on children witnessing his violence demand that he not have custody of his children or see them in anything but a supervised setting. We as a society must recognize the harm that witnessing domestic violence does to defenseless children. Children do not deserve this, and although parents are given wide latitude to raise their children, the law has never tolerated them treating their children any way they want. For those who are tired of the violence on the street and in our society at large, addressing violence in the home is the most logical start. The legal system must give full recognition to the effects witnessing domestic violence have on children, and must incorporate appropriate preventive and interventionary measures so that our children will no longer be the powerless and the unprotected.

This article was adapted from a thesis written by Anna Spenser for Jean Crowe and Susan Brooks.

On Feb. 19, 1999, the Jackson/Madison County Task Force Against Domestic Violence sponsored a day-long conference on domestic violence. Prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, attorneys and the

community were present to hear key note speaker Sarah Buel, a graduate of Harvard Law School, currently a University of Texas law professor and a former prosecutor. Buel was also a victim of domestic violence and a welfare recipient. Buel quoted Attorney General Janet Reno: "Family violence is one of the root causes of virtually every major social problem we face in our nation."

Buel contends that we have to reach out to kids in violent homes to prevent them from becoming perpetrators, victims or juvenile delinquents. According to her statistics, 30 percent of women who are abused are pregnant. She stated that exposure to domestic violence increases the likelihood that a child will be delinquent by 78 percent. According to the Hazeldon Foundation, 63 percent of the population between 11 and 20 years of age who are doing time for homicide are there for killing their mother's abuser. In light of these statistics, why do we continue, she asked, to permit children who witness domestic violence to even visit fathers who are violent? Buel pointed out that "the way we treat our children will determine the level of crime in our community."

She advocates the creation of a more open and safe dialogue in communities where not just women but men (especially community leaders) speak out against domestic violence. The message should be, she said, "most men don't batter their loved ones. This isn't how men should act. Real men do not hit their partners and just because a family member doesn't agree with you, it is NOT okay to use violence."

Buel addressed the obstacles to combating domestic violence in rural areas where geographic isolation is a problem in itself. Many times the abuser asserts control over his partner by moving her to a rural area, refuses to have phone service and controls the only vehicle. Most rural areas have no public transportation and seldom is there a taxi service. Social services are fragmented, far away and often are simply unavailable in a particular area.

Buel notes that one of the more heartbreaking demands we place on the victims of abuse is that they must be the ones to leave their community. How often do we as service providers and advocates require that the victim leave her home, her church, her friends and maybe even her family so she can be safe? We expect her to take her children and herself into an unknown and unfamiliar environment. Why, asks Buel, can't we demand that the abuser give up the home, the car, the community?

Other obstacles include the shame of failure of a marriage or relationship, the lack of access to information about what services are available and how to access them, community and family pressure to "work things out" and society's unspoken demand that women do everything they can to "be a good wife." Buel said her minister, when consulted about the violence in her marriage, encouraged her to return and find a way to make her husband happy. All too often, clergy that women turn to for help remind them of their duties to be wives with little or no concern about the woman's, or child's, safety.

Women in these violent situations face the additional danger of being accused of not protecting their children and risk losing custody. Women who report violence to a state agency have to face serious scrutiny by an unfriendly system. Buel posed the question to Child Protective Services workers: "How can a woman who is physically beaten be expected to protect her child? How can an isolated mother protect? What options does the department offer to her?" Even though protective services are required to work with a family to keep them together, it is far easier to place children into foster care than it is to convince a violent man he needs to leave his wife and home.

The last obstacle identified by Buel is perhaps the most cruel. All too often service providers, law enforcement and others who are supposed to be helping victims question why the woman stays. The shame and shock associated with being hit are often discounted by those who have never experienced a violent act by a loved one. Buel asks us to remember that leaving an abusive situation is a process. Victims are often struggling with the fear and embarrassment of being struck, but as well, we must remember that they love their partners and keep hoping things will "get better."

Given the obstacles that face women in a violent relationship, some of Buel's recommendations include conducting a community safety audit, creating safety plans for women who cannot or will not leave the abuser, holding up as "heroes" those ordinary people (not just service providers) who help, getting prosecutors to buy-in by keeping a court watch and holding the prosecutors and judges accountable to the community. Last, she urged the gathering to come up with more creative ways to reach women who may be in isolated communities.

Linda Seely is an attorney and pro bono coordinator for West Tennessee Legal Services. She is an active member of the TBA Pro Bono Committee.

[Home](#)[Page Finder](#)[Feedback](#)[What's New](#)[Help](#)