

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **COMMISSIONERS AND LOCAL PARTNERS RAISE AWARENESS OF THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Earlier this week, during the weekly General Session meeting, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners was joined by representatives of The Center for Family Safety and Healing and CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence, the county's only domestic violence shelter, to acknowledge October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and highlight the prevalence of domestic abuse in Franklin County.

According to The Center for Family Safety and Healing, one in four women and one in seven men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner.

"Government, non-profits, our private sector, local hospitals, law enforcement and the judicial system have come together to do what we strive to do best in Franklin County - keep families and individuals safe, healthy and thriving," said Commission President, and CHOICES and The Center for Family Safety and Healing Board Member, Marilyn Brown. "Even one violent domestic dispute is too many. Women, men and children who are caught in the web of abuse need to know that there is hope. There is a safe way out of the situation."

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, gender, or sexual orientation. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels and, while both men and women can be victims, most victims are women and children. Victims of domestic violence or people who suspect that a friend or loved one is the victim of abuse can call CHOICES at 614-224-HOME.

The county has long partnered with CHOICES, which operates a temporary shelter and provides counseling, legal support and advocacy, and other services for victims of domestic violence, and is now under the oversight of Lutheran Social Services (LSS). In 2014, CHOICES served 331 adults and 219 children; and received 2,700 calls on their 24-hour crisis line.

"I was privileged to serve as Director of the Ohio AG's Women's Law Project before serving as Commissioner," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "We fought the violence cycle then, and, unfortunately, it continues. It is time for counties, cities, and our state to take stock, again, of strategic action to protect families, women, children and often even their household pets. We must create a safe and secure shelter, here in central Ohio. Let's

ensure it is state of the art for the times. Creative bond financing, with little or no taxpayer impact, could yield a huge return for our families. Continuing to join our partners in the faith community, like the Lutheran Social Services, and private sector concerns like our insurance industry leaders and the Columbus Foundation will be imperative.”

“I grew up in a family of 12, with 7 sisters. My folks had their hands full, but from a very young age, my father taught my brothers and I that hitting a woman is a cowardly act,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “Sadly, domestic violence in our community isn’t slowing down. We must do a better job educating our young people, our boys and girls, that domestic violence is simply unacceptable and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

The Franklin County Commissioners have regularly supported efforts to support families and victims of domestic violence through county grants, and pass-through federal Justice Assistance Program and Violence Against Women grants, more than \$71,000 this year, and also provides approximately \$300,000 in funding through marriage license fees as provisioned by Ohio Law.

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