

2003 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report

Published September 2005



Domestic violence claimed

61 lives

in Wisconsin.

“This is what
you wanted all
along.”

“I just tried to kill
my wife.”

“Do I deserve this?”

“I can snap your
neck real easy.”

“I just tried to
choke my wife to
death.”

“Why are you doing
this to me?”

The **Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV)** is a statewide membership organization of domestic abuse programs, formerly battered women, and other individuals who have joined together to speak with one voice against domestic abuse. As a statewide resource center on domestic violence, we offer such services as:

- ⌘ Training and technical assistance to domestic abuse programs;
- ⌘ A quarterly educational journal;
- ⌘ Forums for the involvement of battered women;
- ⌘ Networking and support for programs for battered women and their children and for professionals in related fields;
- ⌘ Training for professionals in legal, health care, social services, child welfare, elder abuse, housing, education and mental health fields, and for employers throughout Wisconsin; and
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Authors: Laurie Jorgensen, Coordinated Community Response Coordinator; Susan Ramspacher, Prevention Project Coordinator; and Jen Rubin, Education Coordinator

Researchers: Jessica Adamick, Education Intern, Samantha Chubirka, Education Intern; Jennifer Ginsburg, Research Assistant

Editors: Colleen Cox, Program Training and Grants Coordinator; Sue Hemling, Operations Manager; Patti Seger, Director of Policy and Social Action; and Diane Wolff, Interim Executive Director.

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**307 South Paterson Street, Suite 1
Madison, WI 53703
Phone (608) 255-0539
Fax (608) 255-3560
www.wcadv.org**

In This Report

Executive Summary:

The Executive Summary of the 2003 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report offers a brief overview of the report's contents including key data elements that emerged from the individual stories featured and provides context for 2003 data within the first four years of these reports.

Issues and Policy Implications:

When examined more deeply, the experiences and struggles of the people involved in domestic violence related homicides detailed in this report reveal important policy and practice implications for our communities. This section compares Wisconsin's domestic violence homicides to national trends and highlights issues including gun violence, self-defense, leaving the relationship and stalking behavior, risk to others, homicide-suicide and media.

Methodology:

This section describes the research methodology, definitions and criteria used to determine which 2003 Wisconsin homicides to include in this report.

Domestic Violence Homicides:

This section focuses on homicides resulting from domestic violence in Wisconsin in 2003. It contains descriptive information about the fatalities, such as who was killed and by whom, their ages, the locations and incidents of the homicides, what weapons were used, the nature of the victims' and perpetrators' relationships and any known history of abuse in the relationships.

Comparison Data:

With this report, WCADV published its fourth Domestic Violence Homicide Report. At this point, we are unable to draw conclusions about long-term ramifications or concerns. However, as WCADV intends to continue to generate these reports, we have provided comparison of the four years for which we have data, despite the limitations.

Executive Summary

Domestic violence has devastating effects on our lives, homes, communities and society. An intimate relationship that ends in homicide starkly illustrates the most catastrophic possible end. Not only have the victims' and at times the perpetrators' lives ended, the lives of those around them – children, friends, family members, co-workers – have sometimes ended as well. For the surviving family and friends, their lives are forever changed. This report reflects the scope and lethality of domestic violence as a serious social problem, a human rights issue and a crime.

From 2000 to 2003, 149 people were killed in domestic violence-related homicides. One hundred and eight (108) of these people were currently or previously in an intimate relationship with the person who murdered them. The largest percentage of domestic violence homicides are comprised of men killing their female current or former intimate partner. However, we cannot understand the full picture of domestic violence homicides unless we also examine and detail the homicides of others by abusers as they seek to control their intimate partners. Between 2000 and 2003, 39 people were killed as a result of domestic violence, although they had never been in an intimate relationship with the murderer. Two additional people were killed by law enforcement during a domestic violence situation. As this report shows, the children, parents, friends, casual acquaintances, current intimate partners of victims of domestic violence, law enforcement, and other bystanders are at risk when domestic violence becomes lethal.

This report details domestic violence related homicides that occurred in Wisconsin during calendar year (CY) 2003. Homicides were considered “domestic” if the victims and perpetrators were spouses, former spouses, adults with children in common, adults related by blood and adults or teens whom had been in a dating relationship. Homicides of others were also included if the circumstances of murder included intimate partner jealousy or an attempt to protect a domestic violence victim from future harm. This report also details homicides of domestic violence perpetrators that occur as their victims acted in self-defense. Our definition of homicide is the killing of one human being by another. (*Additional information on definitions and criteria can be found under Methodology on page 13.*)

We have retold people's stories in brief. With their stories we hope to educate individuals and systems in communities throughout Wisconsin about what happened to these victims of domestic violence who were killed, in the hope that others will not suffer and die as they did. Information was compiled from reports to the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance (OJA), the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) and through Wisconsin newspaper articles. Every attempt was made to include all domestic violence deaths. We have tried to show the nature of domestic violence as it invades a home and family, and escalates to a fatal end. We used the available facts to tell these stories as accurately as possible. However, the brief presentation of these stories can in no way capture the detail and complexity of every victim's life. A complete picture of each case can only be gleaned by thoroughly reading all of the available documentation.

In addition to the details and implications of the 2003 domestic violence homicide incidents, this report builds upon the information provided in WCADV's previous reports about 2000, 2001 and 2002 domestic violence-related homicides, and attempts to bring forward additional new areas of concern.

The following information provides a context for the extent of the problem and presents aggregate data regarding domestic violence-related homicides in CY 2003:

✂ From January to December 2003, the Bureau of Health Information (BHI) reported 197 deaths by homicide to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). The source of data for BHI is death certificates filed with the State Registrar, Vital Records Section, BHI, Division of Health Care Financing, DHFS. WCADV determined there were **37 incidents of domestic violence homicide** in 2003, which resulted in 61 deaths – **45 people were murdered** and 16 perpetrators committed suicide. The average rate of domestic violence homicide in Wisconsin in 2003 was 2.3 murders a month. When suicides are included the rate is 3.1 domestic violence related deaths per month.

✂ Homicide Victims by Age & Gender

	Female	Male	Total	%
0-6 years	2	1	3	7%
7-17 years	0	2	2	4%
18-29 years	9	5	14	31%
30-49 years	13	7	20	45%
Over 50 years	5	1	6	13%
Total	29	16	45	100%

✂ Race and Ethnicity of Victims and Perpetrators

	Victims	Perpetrators
Caucasian	32	25
African American	13	9
Latino	0	2
Unknown	0	0
Total	45	36

Please note in one incident a police officer committed the homicide in self defense and is not included in the above perpetrator count.

⌘ Victims of the Homicides were Killed in the Following Ways

- 32 shot - 2 victims were beaten before they were shot (handgun, 19; rifle, 8; shotgun, 2; unknown gun, 3) (71%)
- 6 stabbed - 1 victim was also beaten and another was also strangled (13.5%)
- 2 strangled - 1 of these victims was also beaten (4.5%)
- 2 beaten with blunt object – 1 victim was also asphyxiated (4.5%)
- 1 intentional drug overdose (2%)
- 2 intentional head-on collision (4.5%)

⌘ Leaving the Relationship

In 29 of the 37 homicide incidents (78%), the victim and perpetrator were intimate partners.

- Of these 29 cases, 13 (45%) involved a victim who was killed after they had left their abusive partner or had discussed divorce or leaving prior to the murder. In these 13 incidents, 17 people were killed.
- An additional five people were killed because their mother or girlfriend had left their abusive partner or had discussed divorce or leaving prior to the murder.
- In one other incident, a husband was fatally shot by a police officer as he fled a domestic violence scene.

⌘ Relationship of Female Victims to the Homicide Perpetrators

Of the 27 adult women killed, 26 were killed by their male partner (either current or former). One woman was killed when a man, who had abducted his former girlfriend and was pursued by police, crashed his car into the back of her car.

	Husband	Boyfriend	Bystander
Current	10	11	1
Former	2	3	
Total	12	14	1

⌘ Relationship of Male Victims to the Homicide Perpetrators

Of the 12 adult men killed:

- Three men were killed by their female partners (either current or former); two of these three were killed in self-defense.
- Two were killed by the estranged or ex-husbands of their current girlfriends.
- One was killed at work by his employer's estranged boyfriend.
- Three were killed in the same incident by a man who was jealous of an existing or perceived relationship between one of the male homicide victims and the perpetrator's girlfriend.
- One was killed by a police officer during a domestic violence situation.
- One was a police officer killed during a domestic violence situation.
- One was killed when a man, who had abducted his former girlfriend and was pursued by police, crashed his car into the back of the victim's car.

⌘ **Prior History of Domestic Violence**

In 20 of the 37 incidents (54%), prior history of domestic violence was documented by police or court records or reported by family or friends.

⌘ **Location of Murder**

For 30 of the 45 homicides (67%) , the victims were killed in their homes, just outside their homes or at the temporary homes in which they were residing.

⌘ **Gender of Perpetrator in Murder/Suicide**

All 16 of the murder/suicides involved male perpetrators killing female and/or male victims and then committing suicide. In all of these incidents, the murderer used a gun to kill their victim and themselves.

⌘ **Impact on Children**

- Six children were murdered in domestic violence-related homicides:
 - Three children under the age of 18 were murdered alongside their mothers.
 - Two brothers, ages 15 and 18, were killed by their stepfather.
 - One 13 year-old boy was shot by his father while his mother was packing to leave with the boy.
- Thirty children under 18 were orphaned, left motherless and/or fatherless due to domestic violence homicide.
- Sixteen minor children and five adult children were present at the scene or found the murder victim (s). (This includes children, siblings or other relatives of the victim or perpetrator.)

Domestic Violence Homicides by County:

In 2003, 16 (43%) domestic violence homicide incidents occurred in rural communities and 21 (57%) were committed in urban or suburban settings.

The table on the facing page shows the homicides organized by the county in which they occurred.

County	Victim's Name	Date of Incident
Buffalo	Neil Loewenhagen, 45	June 29
Dane	Scott Boardman, 31 Lloyd Gentry, 15; Michael Gentry, 18	April 24 June 23
Douglas	Grace Tyson, 47	June 10
Grant	Amy Fecht, 37	April 4
Green Lake	Bruce Williams, 38	October 19
Jackson	Taffy Groth, 32	March 29
Kenosha	LeRoy Copen, 56; Lynn Copen, 55	October 12
Lincoln	Miranda Reichert, 26; Cara Reichert, 3 and AJ Reichert, 2	November 25
Milwaukee	Theresa Kish, 31 Candice Farrington, 19; D'Naja Morgan, 2 Patricia Walker, 38 Larrisa Murphy, 18 Sharon (Sherry) Bartholomew, 65 Dorothy Figgers, 49 Nathaniel Bearden, Jr., 36 James Thomas, 41 Mary S. King, 45 Karen Flechner, 46 Kirk Bickham Jr., 22; Deshawn Windbush, 22 and Carl Hall, 24 Melissa Elderbrook, 24 Mannix Franklin, Sr., 31 Sarah Hicks, 22	January 2 January 25 February 17 March 5 March 18 April 9 April 20 June 13 June 15 August 9 September 24 October 1 October 31 December 6
Outagamie	Donna (Vogel) Huisman, 48	February 19
Portage	Nicole J. Odegaard, 29	July 5
Rock	Debra (Debi) J. Sisson, 46	April 11
Sauk	Tamera Foster, 29	September 4
Sheboygan	Tanya Meyer-Garcia, 24	August 3
Shawano	Teresa J. Allen, 41	February 2
Taylor	Kathy Slicker, 32	February 16
Waupaca	Cynthia Noll, 56	July 3
Walworth	Anthony LaPorte, 39 Michael Pisarek, 13	September 28 July 31
Waukesha	Amanda Ausloos, 29; Nicholas Krause, 23 Kristy Jo Szentes, 35	May 2 November 15
Winnebago	Virginia Sternbeck, 78 Judith Kempinger, 61	April 3 May 15

Issues and Policy Implications

Gun Violence

Gun violence presents an unusually high risk of injury and death for women in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. An analysis of domestic violence homicide of females (a woman murdered by a spouse, intimate acquaintance, or close relative) showed that having one or more guns in the home made a woman 7.2 times more likely to be the victim of such a homicide (Violence Policy Center, 2001). In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in a recent study that females are more likely to be murdered with a firearm by their intimate partners than by all other means combined.¹ Additionally, firearms are more common in the homes of battered women than in the households in the general population.² Noting the heightened risk that guns pose to domestic violence victims, federal law restricts an offender convicted of a domestic violence related misdemeanor crime from possessing a firearm. Similarly, both federal and Wisconsin law prohibits possession of firearms while a person is subject to an active domestic violence restraining order.

In Wisconsin in 2003, 24 individual perpetrators killed their victims using a gun.³ Of these 24 perpetrators, all were adults at the time of the murder.

- Two of these perpetrators were prohibited from possessing firearms stemming from prior felony convictions.
- Two had pending domestic violence cases against them at the time of the murder.
- Three had been convicted of crimes that involved the use of firearms.
- Three had prior misdemeanor domestic violence convictions.

According to several research studies including the National Institute of Justice's 2003 Journal dedicated to Intimate Partner Homicide, when firearms are in homes, an abused woman was six times more likely than other abused women to be killed.⁴ A 2004 study found that guns are kept in homes where there is domestic violence more often than in homes where there is no violence. In addition, if a gun was present, its use during the course of domestic violence was relatively common.⁵ Of the 24 incidents that involved gun killings, 17 (71%) occurred in the victim's home, also the location where the gun was kept.

¹ Leonard J. Paulozzi et al, "Surveillance for Homicide Among Intimate Partners – United States, 1981 – 1998," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries* 50 (October 12, 2001): 1 – 16.

² Susan B. Sorenson, PhD et al, "Weapons in the Lives of Battered Women", *American Journal of Public Health*, 2004; 94:1412 - 1417

³ In 2003 there were 25 domestic violence homicide incidents involved guns. Twenty-four perpetrators excludes one incident where a police officer shot an offender during the course of a domestic violence incident.

⁴ This officer is not included in the above section as he was acting in the line of duty.

⁵ Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al, "Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide," *Intimate Partner Homicide*, National Institute of Justice Journal; November 2003, Issue No. 250: 14-19. Sorenson, 2004

Self Defense

Some victims, who have a history of being battered and threatened with their lives, engage in violence to defend themselves. In “Reviewing Domestic Violence Fatalities: Summarizing National Developments”, Neil Websdale, et. al. relate “Women who killed men nearly always did so out of self-defense. These women have always, or nearly always, been pushed to the brink of human endurance by the batterers who they eventually kill.”⁶ It has long been believed that domestic violence victims will seek to leave their relationship to escape the oppression of their abusers, whereas batterers will go to great lengths, even killing their partners to keep them from leaving. Research has revealed that self-defense to escape or protect victims from their partner’s violence was the most frequently reported motivation for women’s use of violence.⁷

Wisconsin law allows for self-defense claims. The law directs that an individual may use only that amount of force that a reasonable person, in the same set of circumstances, would deem necessary to terminate an unlawful interference (such as battery or other violent acts). Many domestic violence victims suffer violent histories at the hands of their abusers and at a crucial moment lash out in lethal violence to fend off an attack. A small number of victims respond to the violence they have suffered by retaliating against their abuser at a later time, when they are not under direct attack. Whether using self-defense in the midst of violence, or retaliating later on, these victims are responding to the abuse they have suffered and to real threats in their lives. Many of these victims use lethal force as a last resort for their survival or to defend their children.

In Wisconsin in 2003, two women who committed homicides against their abusers had suffered a history of violence. In conjunction with their assertion that they acted in self-defense, both were cleared of charges.

Leaving the Relationship and Stalking Behavior

Every year thousands of battered women make the decision to leave their abusive relationship and make a new and better life for themselves and their children. Tragically, some of those women are in this report. Though battered women are often blamed for not leaving a relationship the first time abuse occurs, it is often more dangerous for battered women as they attempt to leave and after they have left a violent relationship. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, the rate of domestic violence homicides by husbands was 25 times higher when women were separated from their husbands than when married and cohabiting.⁸

In 29 of the 37 homicide incidents in 2003, the victim and perpetrator were intimate partners. Of these 29 cases, 13 involved a victim who was killed after they had left their

⁶ Websdale, Neil, et al, “*Reviewing Domestic Violence Fatalities: Summarizing National Developments*”, Violence Against Women Online Resources, 1998.

⁷ Saunders, D. G., “When Battered Women Use Violence: Husband Abuse or Self-Defense?”, *Violence and Victims*, 1, 47-60, 1986.

⁸ Websdale, Neal. *Understanding Domestic Homicide*. Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1999.

abusive partner or had discussed divorce or leaving prior to the murder. In these incidents, 17 people were killed. An additional five people were killed because their mother or girlfriend had left their abusive partner or had discussed divorce or leaving prior to the murder. What we experience in Wisconsin parallels the national research. Children are also at risk when their mother leaves an abusive relationship. In 2003, six children were killed by their father, stepfather or their mother's boyfriend, when the mother talked about separation or attempted to leave. One child was killed when the perpetrator surprised him and his mother while they were in the act of packing to leave.

Stalking behaviors of the abuser can escalate the risk for battered women and are a clear indication of potentially lethal danger. Seventy-five percent of intimate partner femicides reviewed in a recent study were preceded by one or more incidents of stalking within a year of the crime.⁹ In several incidents in this report, victims were stalked prior to their deaths. In one incident, an estranged husband laid in wait in trees outside the house; in another, an estranged husband parked outside the workplace of a victim to watch and wait; and in yet two others, colleagues of the victims described the perpetrator's behavior prior to the homicide as stalking. Acts of stalking are frequently undetected as stalkers will follow victims in more than one jurisdiction and attention is required to piece together isolated incidents and other tactics of control. The danger indicated by stalking behavior can not be underscored enough and these Wisconsin cases, along with national research, points to the need for dedicated, progressive and attentive response by communities and support for victims.

Homicide-Suicide

Sixteen out of 34 perpetrators killed themselves after they committed homicide.¹⁰ That is almost half (47%) of the abusers detailed in the 2003 report. The proportion of suicidal abusers would reach (56%) if the three men who intended to kill themselves but changed their minds after the homicide or failed in their suicide attempt were included. According to medical studies, between 1000 and 1500 deaths per year in the United States are due to homicide-suicide.¹¹ The Violence Policy Center (VPC) studied homicide-suicides in the U.S. Trends VPC identified include: most homicide-suicides involve a firearm (94.5%); most perpetrators of a homicide-suicide are male (90%); and most homicide-suicides involve an intimate partner (74%).¹² In 2003 Wisconsin domestic violence-related homicide-suicides, all 16 (100%) of the perpetrators who committed suicide used firearms to kill their victims and then themselves and were all males.

⁹ McFarlane, J., Campbell, J., Wilts, S., et al, 199. "Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide." *Homicide Studies*.

¹⁰ While there are 37 incidents of domestic violence related homicides, this number excludes the two cases where women killed their abusers in self defense and were not charged and the one case where an abuser was killed by a police officer.

¹¹ Yekeen A. Aderibigbe, "Violence in America: A Survey of Suicide Linked to Homicides," *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 42, no. 4 (1997): 662-665.

¹² Violence Policy Center, *American Roulette: The Untold Story of Murder-Suicide in the United States*, 2002.

Researchers have started to look at risk factors specific to homicide-suicide in abusive relationships. In an eleven-city case control study, researchers found that abusers who committed homicide-suicide were more likely to have made prior suicide threats (51%) and have access to guns (81%).¹³ According to public information, three of the perpetrators who committed homicide-suicide in our report had made prior suicide attempts or threats (19%). An additional two men were noted to suffer from significant depression but we were unable to uncover evidence of prior suicide threats. As all 16 perpetrators killed their victim and themselves with a gun, 100% had access to guns. The case control study also found that homicide-suicide cases were more likely to involve a husband, either current or former.¹⁴ In our report, this was true in 69% of the cases of homicide-suicide.

Risk to Others

While men killing their female current or former intimate partners makes up the largest percentage of domestic violence related homicides, we will miss the full death toll of domestic violence unless we also examine the many other homicides which take place as abusers seek to control their intimate partners. Not every victim of domestic violence homicide was the victim in the abusive relationship. This report includes accounts of 15 homicides of people who had never been in an intimate relationship with the person who killed them.

- Three men were shot in one instance because of a domestic violence perpetrator's jealousy. Two were bystanders.
- Two men were shot in separate incidents by their current girlfriend's ex- or estranged partners.
- A father shot his teenage son and then himself.
- A step-father shot his two teenage stepsons.
- A man was killed at his employer's home by her estranged boyfriend.
- A couple was killed when a man, who had abducted his former girlfriend and was pursued by the police, crashed his car into their car.
- A police officer was shot during a domestic violence incident.
- Three young children, all under the age of four, were killed along with their mother in two separate instances.

These incidents should compel society to seriously consider jealousy and possessiveness as warning signs of domestic violence. Combined with a sense of entitlement, they can lead to murder.

Media

Domestic violence is a significant public safety issue. While it occurs between individuals who have a relationship, it has a direct impact on the quality of life in any given community. The media has a crucial role to play in public education about domestic violence. How domestic violence is reported affects public opinion, which has an impact on public policy, legislation, and ultimately access to interventions that may help victims and their children to be safe.

¹³ Koziol-McLain, PhD, et al, "Risk Factors for Femicide-Suicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multi-Site Case Control Study.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Domestic violence is difficult to investigate and complicated to report. Researchers have studied news coverage of domestic violence fatalities in Washington and Rhode Island.¹⁵ For the purposes of this report, we conducted an examination of media reports of domestic violence homicides. Our findings mirror those of Washington and Rhode Island.

In compiling this report we read 186 newspaper articles. They varied in length from multiple pages to just a few paragraphs. With few exceptions, regardless of the length or the newspaper they appeared in, news reports often failed to provide accurate or serious coverage of domestic violence as a deadly public health issue.

Issue: Domestic violence homicides were rarely labeled as domestic violence or placed in a broader context of domestic violence

Of the 186 articles reviewed, only six (3.2%) included domestic violence or a similar meaning phrase in the title of the article. In addition, only 18 (9.7%) specifically labeled the incident as domestic violence. By failing to place the murder in the larger context of domestic violence, the reporters and their newspapers missed an opportunity to inform the public of the seriousness of domestic violence in their community. These domestic violence-related homicides do not happen out of the blue. Instead, they are extreme examples of abusers using power and control over their intimate partners. Each homicide provides an opportunity to educate the public about domestic violence and about resources that are available to help victims in Wisconsin communities. Because a domestic violence homicide offers a chilling reminder that leaving a violent relationship can be lethal, the media can help shatter myths about why victims stay in relationships with violent partners. Media can also provide victims who are considering leaving with information about resources that may be able to help them safely leave.

Solution: Media should inform the public with clear and accurate reporting. Placing the homicide within the context of domestic violence will provide a more accurate picture and help the public understand motive. Media can also provide the public with information about resources that can help victims and abusers.

Issue: Coverage provided an inaccurate view of domestic violence and reinforced myths

Instead of labeling these homicides as domestic violence or potentially domestic violence-related homicides, often these crimes were given labels that have nothing to do with domestic violence. Some of the headlines about 2003 homicides read “love triangle”, “woman found dead in home”, “daughter home during slaying of mother”, “woman slain” or “shooting death”. In these instances, the perpetrator of the violence is left out of the equation completely as with “shooting death” or “woman slain”. Several articles turned the violence into a mutual act between the partners, “unaware that they were having problems” or “he was pushed to the limit. He suffered black eyes and mental abuse.” In most cases, the homicide was an extreme act within a pattern of violence that was firmly established. The homicide was not

¹⁵ C.F. Bullock and J. Cubert, “Coverage of Domestic Violence Fatalities by Newspapers in Washington State,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, May 2002, vol. 17, no. 5, 475-499. “Rhode Island Media Study: 1996-1999” in *Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Journalists*, produced by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2000.

unpredictable. Many people knew about the violence. Often, there is a documented prior history of domestic violence with the records easily obtained by a simple database search.

Solution: By finding and reporting the evidence or facts that demonstrate the intentionality and purpose of this domestic violence related crime, the media can further serve to demystify domestic violence. Careful questioning or investigating to determine a prior history of domestic violence or signs of abuse and inclusion of the agent of the act can help to capture the complete picture.

Issue: Sources shaped the stories and were often limited or poorly chosen

Our review found that domestic violence experts were rarely quoted in stories covering domestic violence fatalities. When reporters do not report the homicide as domestic violence-related crime, they miss the opportunity to provide the public information and resources that would be available through interviews with domestic violence advocates and batterers' treatment providers. These local expert perspectives are nearly always left out of the story. Most typically, reporters interview family, friends and often neighbors of the victim and the perpetrator and leave out the larger context of domestic violence. As a result, the coverage of a man who killed his wife and two young children while they slept and then killed himself, includes a quote from a family member, "It was just tragic. There's no one to blame". In another example, a man who stabbed his wife as his daughter watched is described as "generous and caring", "a man who went out of his way for his whole family". It is critical to be careful using sources emotionally connected to the victim and the perpetrator. Family, friends and co-workers may be disinclined to identify or view the relationship as violent and may be reluctant to speak negatively about the perpetrator or see the murder victim as a victim of domestic violence. For loved ones, media interviews can occur within the early stages of grief and shock; a time when they might not present an accurate picture of the history of violence in the relationship.¹⁶

Solution: Media should include interviews with local domestic violence and batterers treatment experts and information from credible researchers. Make sure interviews with family and friends are placed within the context of domestic violence.

The findings of our review mirrors national studies, which found that news stories regarding domestic violence murders often reinforce myths and inaccuracies about domestic violence. They do this by implying victim-blaming or perpetrator excusing attitudes, blaming the act on cultural or class differences and reinforcing the idea that the fatal violence came out of the blue, as opposed to being the culmination of a history of violence and controlling behaviors.¹⁷ We must seek accurate and informed coverage and challenge journalism professionals to set a high standard of responsibility to the public including murder victims and their loved ones. When reporters and their media outlets are conscientious and informed in their approach to reporting crimes of domestic violence, they contribute to helping our communities understand the dynamics of domestic violence and how domestic violence can turn deadly. Most important, media can become a solution to the problem by providing victims with information about resources that can help.

¹⁶ Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Covering Domestic Violence: A guide for journalists and other media professionals*, 2004.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Violence Across the Lifespan Regardless of Race, Economic Status, and Sexual Orientation

Domestic violence experts have long noted that domestic abuse affects persons of all ages, races, and economic groups, regardless of sexual orientation. This report merely reminds us that the myth that domestic abuse only effects those who are married, heterosexual, young, and poor is exactly that...a myth.

Methodology

Our definition of homicide is the killing of one human being by another. This encompasses criminal, justifiable, self-defense and reckless homicides. Homicides were considered domestic violence-related if:

- The victims and perpetrators were spouses, former spouses, adults with children in common and adults or teens that are in or had been in a dating relationship. We also include cases that involve adults related by blood if dynamics of power and control are demonstrated.
- The homicide of a person *other than* the intimate partner and it occurred within the context of domestic violence. This includes cases where the circumstances of the murder included jealousy concerning a current or former partner of the perpetrator or of a person who attempted to protect a domestic violence victim from future harm. It also includes the killing of perpetrators who are a threat to law enforcement or the killing of law enforcement in the line of duty.
- The homicide occurred as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between intimate partners. For example, when a partner or estranged partner kills their children in order to exact revenge on his partner.

To determine the domestic violence homicides that occurred in Wisconsin in 2003, we examined the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) submitted by Wisconsin Law Enforcement to the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance (OJA). UCRs provide anonymous demographic information about Wisconsin homicides. From these reports, the following information is available: agency that issued the report; county in which the homicide occurred; date, type and location of homicide; age, sex and race of the victim and offender; weapon used; relationship between the perpetrator and victim; and circumstance of the homicide. The UCR does not provide the name of the victim or the offender. The UCRs were reviewed and domestic violence related homicides were identified.

Following the review of all UCRs, we conducted an Internet search for newspaper accounts of the selected homicides. Finally, if there were gaps in what we learned about a homicide from the newspaper or we needed to verify facts, we contacted one or more of the following: local domestic violence programs, district attorney's offices, adult protective services, law enforcement, medical examiners or coroners and coordinated community response coordinators in the counties where the homicides took place. We also used Wisconsin Circuit Court Access to research the criminal history of the homicide victim and perpetrator.

For each incident, we sought to uniformly report the facts of the case. However, if additional

information was not available to us, we reported only the simple demographic information available in the UCR. Reporting on domestic violence related homicides is complicated since we can not know all of the characteristics of a domestic violence relationship that ends in death. In the final analysis, our knowledge is limited by the information reported to community systems, friends and family, involved parties prior to the homicide and how much of that knowledge finds its way into the official record.¹⁸

The scope of our report is limited to those homicides identifiable through public access. Due to confidentiality laws, WCADV could only obtain records of public access and such data as death certificates were not available to us. We know this methodology is imperfect and can result in undercounts in two areas:

- ***Children killed by domestic violence abusers:*** We include children who were killed as a direct result of a domestic violence incident in the report. We believe this count is low since a homicide of a child is often viewed as an isolated incident of child abuse. An investigation of a child homicide can often overlook past domestic violence or it might not be included in the public record. While we believe that a larger number of child deaths are directly related to an ongoing pattern of domestic abuse, our current methods of tracking homicides do not allow us to consistently identify children killed by domestic violence abusers.
- ***Same sex relationships:*** It is likely that we undercount domestic violence homicides that occur in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) relationships. Since LGBT relationships can be hidden, the nature of a relationship might not be accurately identified in the public record of a homicide. An LGBT relationship might be coded as “friend”, “roommate” or “other known to victim.”

In compiling our summary data, we sought to include the total number of homicides committed in 2003 in Wisconsin. This figure is available from several sources, including the Bureau of Health Information (BHI), Office of Justice Assistance and the Firearm Injury Center Violence Injury Reporting System (FIC-VIRS), however the figures differ.¹⁹ Each agency compiles their data from various reporting methods including death certificates, police reports, coroner records, medical examiner and hospital records. We chose to use the figure reported by the Bureau of Health Information as noted in our Executive Summary, page 2.

In each case of homicide-suicide, we chose to list the murdered person in our heading as we recognized this person as the homicide victim. When we knew the information, we included the number and ages at the time of the homicide of children who survived their parent.

¹⁸ Websdale, Neil, Ph.D., *Lethality Assessment Tools: A Critical Analysis*, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 1999.

¹⁹ BHI reports 197 homicide related deaths in “Wisconsin Deaths 2003”; OJA reports 174 homicides in “Wisconsin Crime and Arrests 2003” and Firearm Injury Center, Violent Injury Reporting System reports 199 homicides.

Domestic Violence Homicide

January 2

Theresa Kish

31 years old

Milwaukee

Milwaukee County

Theresa Kish was stabbed to death by her boyfriend, Cesar Farias-Mendoza, 33. She suffered ten stab wounds, including one to her neck that cut her jugular vein. Theresa and Cesar had been drinking in the apartment that they shared and began to argue. After a struggle, Cesar beat and stabbed Theresa in the basement of a neighboring building.

There was no known prior history of domestic violence between Theresa and Cesar.

Cesar Farias-Mendoza was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide, which was amended to Second Degree Intentional Homicide. He was sentenced to 42 years in prison with 20 years of extended supervision.

Theresa is survived by her 16 and 8-year-old daughters.

January 25

Candice Farrington

19 years old

D’Naja Morgan

Two years old

Milwaukee

Milwaukee County

Candice Farrington was fatally shot in the head and neck by her boyfriend, Quan Hill, 22. Quan also shot Candice’s 2-year-old daughter D’Naja Morgan twice in the chest, also killing her. He then killed himself.

The murders took place in Quan’s home, which he shared with his mother, his 2-year-old daughter and his 7-year-old brother. His brother discovered the bodies in an upstairs bedroom.

At the time of the murders/suicide, Candice and Quan had dated for about six months. Candice’s relatives said that Quan was violent toward Candice and she was trying to leave him at the time of the homicides. According to her relatives, Quan terrorized and stalked her whenever she tried to leave him. To get away from him, she planned to move in with her mother in Atlanta, GA.

February 2

Teresa J. Allen
41 years old

Marion
Shawano County

Teresa J. Allen was fatally shot by her boyfriend, Kenneth Wolfe, 47. Kenneth shot her in the head with a handgun while she was on a loveseat in the home that they shared. He then called the police, saying that he had accidentally shot Teresa.

The police investigating the homicide recognized the inconsistencies in Kenneth's story. At different points, he explained that he had tripped, the gun had fallen and accidentally gone off, and that he sat on the gun which was under the couch cushion. Forensic evidence contradicted his story, indicating that the gunshot came from about 18 inches from Teresa's head.

Kenneth had a history of domestic violence toward Teresa. Colleagues of Teresa's reported that he monitored her behavior, stalked her, and threatened her with death if she ever left him. According to Teresa's mother, Kenneth was "jealous and possessive and had previously pointed a gun at her." At the time of Teresa's death, old bruises were found on her body. Kenneth also had numerous domestic violence incidents against his ex-wife in Ohio.

Kenneth Wolfe was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide. Shortly before the trial was to begin, Kenneth pled no contest to Second Degree Reckless Homicide. He received the maximum penalty of 20 years prison and 10 years extended supervision.

February 16**Kathy Slicker**

32 years old

Thorp

Taylor County

Kathy Slicker died at her home of a drug overdose given to her by her husband, Russell Slicker, 46. Russell called authorities to their home where they found Kathy unconscious on the floor of the living room. She died two days later at a hospital.

A few days earlier, Russell and a friend had traveled to Minnesota to obtain drugs. Russell and Kathy argued about the drugs before her death. He told law enforcement officers that Kathy might have taken some Ephedrine and Viagra and that he gave his wife additional methamphetamines that killed her.

Court records show physical violence between Russell and Kathy eight years before her death. In 1994, Kathy reported two separate attacks by Russell – a physical assault with a weapon and an attempted sexual assault. Within a month they were separated. While they were separated in 1994, Kathy met Russell to exchange their baby and he assaulted her again. Russell was arrested and charged with battery and disorderly conduct and placed on 18 months probation. Kathy received a domestic abuse injunction at that time.

There is no other documentation of violence toward Kathy between 1995 and 2003 but Russell was convicted of a sexual assault against a different unconscious female in 1998.

Russell Slicker was charged with First Degree Reckless Homicide/Deliver Drugs for Kathy's death in July, 2003. While the case was pending in January 2004, Russell died of a drug overdose.

Kathy is survived by two sons, ages 10 and 12.

February 17**Patricia Walker**

38 years old

Milwaukee

Milwaukee County

Patricia Walker was fatally stabbed in the living room of her apartment by her estranged husband, Joseph Walker Jr., 38.

On the night she was killed, Patricia talked to a brother and sister on the phone and told them that Joseph was outside her apartment drinking and occasionally coming to the door. Patricia told them she felt sorry for him outside in the cold. Sometime after this she let him in, they argued and he stabbed her to death.

Joseph was attending court ordered batterers treatment counseling after attacking Patricia in July 2002. He was three months into 18 months of probation, which required him to have no contact with Patricia. Relatives of Patricia said that Patricia had been verbally and physically abused by Joseph during their two year marriage.

Joseph Walker Jr. was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide, pled guilty and was sentenced to 21 years in prison and 12 years of extended supervision.

February 19**Donna (Vogel)
Huisman**

48 years old

**Kaukauna
Outagamie County**

Donna (Vogel) Huisman was strangled to death in her bed by her estranged husband, Joseph C. Huisman, 49. He had tied her wrists and ankles with cable ties and taped her mouth shut with duct tape purchased the day before. He beat her, causing significant trauma. Joe killed Donna while her 18-year-old daughter slept in the bedroom next door.

Donna's daughter woke up to the sound of a scream. She heard Joe say "This is what you wanted all along" and a muffled reply from her mother. Shortly afterward she heard police officers in the home and learned Joe had killed her mother. The police were summoned by Joe who called from a cell phone to say "I just tried to kill my wife" and "I just tried to choke my wife to death." He fled the home and drove Donna's car to far northern Wisconsin with a shotgun. He said he intended to kill himself but had mistakenly taken the wrong gauge shells.

After five years of marriage, Donna had filed for divorce and Joe received the papers just four days before the murder. According to her family, they had been living separately but in the same home for some time. On the day of the murder Joe had withdrawn \$10,000 from their bank account and police found \$13,000 in their home.

Joe's previous wife had divorced him as well; three months after the divorce he had been charged with disorderly conduct for physically assaulting her.

Joseph Huisman was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide and a five-day trial occurred. The jury found him guilty after an hour and a half of deliberation. He was sentenced to mandatory life in prison with no eligibility for parole.

Donna is survived by her 18-year-old daughter.

March 5**Larrisa Murphy**
18 years old**Milwaukee
Milwaukee County**

Larrisa Murphy died from asphyxia after being strangled by her boyfriend, Christian Spencer, 22. On the afternoon of the homicide Larrisa met Christian at his house. He was angry that she was not wearing the ring he had given her and asked her to leave his house. She apologized for not wearing the ring and began to hug and kiss him and told Christian that she loved him. He pushed her away and then put his hands around her neck and started squeezing her neck. According to the criminal complaint, Christian said to her "Why are you doing this to me?", "Do I deserve this?" while he strangled her and Larrisa continued to apologize. He claimed he did not know how long he was strangling her but that her eyes just shut, she stopped talking and at that point he let her go. He picked up her limp body and placed her on his bed and laid down next to her. He fell asleep for about two hours and when he woke up discovered her body was cold and called 911.

Christian Spencer was charged with First Degree Reckless Homicide, pled guilty and was sentenced to 22 years in state prison with 8 years extended supervision.

March 18**Sharon (Sherry)
Bartholomew**
65 years old**Milwaukee
Milwaukee County**

Sharon (Sherry) Bartholomew was shot to death in her apartment by Lawrence Bryl, 53, her companion of seven plus years. He then shot and killed himself.

Lawrence was living with Sherry in her home at the time of the murder. He also had a house in Saukville. Before the murder, Sherry had told Lawrence that she wanted him to find some place else to stay. Lawrence wanted to marry Sherry. Sherry's friends confirmed that she also was speaking with them about wanting to live separately from Lawrence and not to marry him.

Lawrence suffered from depression. He checked himself in and out of hospitals regarding his mental health issues. He was on medication but would sometimes stop taking it because of its side effects.

March 29**Taffy Groth**
32 years old**Black River Falls
Jackson County**

Taffy Groth allegedly was shot and killed by her boyfriend, Michael Benz, 38. She died from a gunshot wound to the head and her body was found in the bedroom of the trailer home she shared with Michael, another man and his 14-year-old son.

Michael told sheriff's deputies that Taffy had committed suicide. It took a year for authorities to gather evidence that suggested Michael murdered Taffy. Michael was arrested in September 2004.

At the probable cause hearing, witnesses said that the night of Taffy's death she had told Michael that she was leaving him. Moments before the homicide occurred, the 14-year-old who lived in the trailer home said he heard them arguing and Taffy say she was packing to leave. He then heard three bangs against the bedroom wall and a bang that sounded like an explosive. The autopsy report indicated that Taffy had facial fractures unrelated to the shooting and speculated that she was likely not conscious when she was shot.

Weeks before the alleged homicide, friends had become concerned about Taffy's safety. While there was no documented history of Michael's past violence toward Taffy, his ex-wife was granted a restraining order against him in October 2000. He was convicted with knowingly violating this domestic abuse order in 2002. Since then, Michael's ex-wife continued to seek restraining orders fearing for her safety. Several days after the alleged homicide of Taffy, she again applied for another temporary restraining order against him.

Michael Benz was charged on September 23, 2004 with First Degree Intentional Homicide. The case is scheduled for a jury trial in November 2005.

April 3**Virginia Sternbeck**

78 years old

**Grand Chute
Winnebago County**

Virginia Sternbeck was shot by her husband, Gordon Sternbeck, 79, who then shot and killed himself. Before shooting himself, Gordon called 911 to report he had shot his wife and was going to take his life. Virginia had long suffered from a terminal illness that had recently gotten worse. Friends and close neighbors reported that Virginia had been saying that Gordon was going to help and do this for her. There was no prior history of domestic violence and friends spoke of them as a close and loving couple.

April 4**Amy Fecht**

37 years old

**Potosi
Grant County**

Amy Fecht was fatally stabbed seven times by her husband, Joseph (Joe) Fecht, 41. She died in the arms of her 13-year-old daughter, who witnessed the assault and called 911. Her daughter saw her father pin and throw Amy to the floor. Joe repeatedly stabbed Amy as she fled from the front door to the kitchen and into the upstairs hallway and bathroom. He used several kitchen knives, often needing to return to the kitchen because his excessive force broke the blades off the knives. Joe stabbed Amy three times in the back and four times in the chest. He then fled to the basement and held police at bay for 3 ½ hours with a knife and a rifle. He was taken into custody with self-inflicted superficial knife wounds.

Earlier that day, Joe had confronted Amy with her boyfriend in an apartment above her workplace and threw her clothes out of the window. She then returned home with him and informed him that she wanted to end the marriage. She left for work and Joe showed up three times at her workplace. Before the end of her shift, her 13-year-old daughter called her crying and begging her to come home, at the insistence of her father.

Amy's family reported that Joe, Amy's husband of 19 years, was verbally, physically and sexually abusive to Amy. Just weeks before the murder, Joe had instigated a bar fight accusing Amy of sleeping with another man. Family and friends report that Amy stayed away from home that night in fear for her safety.

Joseph Fecht entered a plea of not guilty by reason of mental disease, but two doctors' reports did not support such a plea. He was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide with use of a Dangerous Weapon, which was amended after a guilty plea to Second Degree Intentional Homicide. He is sentenced to 30 years in state prison with an additional 20 years of extended supervision.

Amy is survived by four young daughters, an adult son and a stepson.

April 9**Dorothy Figgers**

49 years old

Milwaukee
Milwaukee County

Dorothy Figgers was fatally shot by her former boyfriend, Stanley Atkins, 39. He shot her in the head while in his car in an alley. They had been dating for over a year.

Dorothy and Stanley had a violent relationship. In 1997, a previous girlfriend filed restraining orders against Stanley. He was convicted in 1997 of Substantial Battery with intent to do harm and was prohibited from possessing firearms.

Stanley Atkins was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide and Felon in Possession of a Firearm. Stanley provided his own legal representation at the jury trial. He was found guilty of both counts and sentenced to life in prison with parole eligibility after 45 years.

April 11**Debra (Debi) J. Sisson**

46 years old

Beloit
Rock County

Debra (Debi) Sisson was murdered by her estranged boyfriend, Mark L. Lucian, 34, in her home. Mark stabbed her in the neck and also strangled her before she died. He then took her money and credit cards, fled Debi's home, and went into hiding. Debi was not discovered until she did not show up for work for two days in a row. Her dog and two cats were suffering from malnutrition and thirst. Mark was arrested after alluding the police for at least five days. He attempted to implicate Debi in her own death, stating that during a fight she picked up the knife and cut her own neck. While in jail awaiting trial, Mark stopped taking medication for a prior sickness and refused to eat. He was taken to Mendota Mental Health Institute and after a month of observation he was deemed fit for trial. In the 21 months between his arrest and the scheduled trial, Mark hired and fired five attorneys.

Mark and Debi had been dating for six years. According to her family and co-workers, at the time of the murder Debi was seeking to end their relationship and Mark had moved out of her house. One month prior to the murder, Mark was arrested for disorderly conduct in an assault of Debi but the case was not pursued for prosecution. In 1995, Mark served 18 months probation after being convicted of battery/disorderly conduct against another woman.

One week before the trial in which Mark Lucian was to be prosecuted for First Degree Intentional Homicide, he pled guilty to the lesser offense of Second Degree Intentional Homicide. The district attorney recommended 20 years in prison with 20 years of extended supervision. The judge sentenced him to 27 years in prison with 13 years of extended supervision.

April 20

Nathaniel Bearden, Jr.
36 years old

Milwaukee
Milwaukee County

Nathaniel Bearden, Jr. was killed by Jacqueline Lowe, his 42 year-old girlfriend. Jacqueline and Nathaniel knew each other for two years and had been living together for seven months. Nathaniel had been abusive in the past and Jacqueline was trying to get a restraining order at the time of the homicide. She had bought a gun since she feared for her safety. She shot Nathaniel when he was in the process of kicking in the bathroom door.

No charges have been filed against Jacqueline.

April 24

Scott Boardman
31 years old

Verona
Dane County

Rushing from the garage to the house, Scott Boardman was shot by his girlfriend's ex-husband, Frank Lunkley, 48. On the morning of the murder, Scott and his live-in girlfriend and her two sons, ages 8 and 10, were all in her car in the garage as Frank drove into the driveway and rammed the back of their car. Sensing something was very wrong, Scott's girlfriend directed her sons to run from the scene and Scott to go into the house. Scott suffered from a permanent leg injury from a previous car accident so he could not run. As she followed so did Frank with his handgun. He immediately fired five shoots at Scott and then fled to the basement where he shot and killed himself. Scott died in the living room as he tried to reach the back door.

Frank and Scott's girlfriend had been married for 15 years and their uncontested divorce was finalized in December 2002. She and Scott began dating and had been living in her house for about two months prior to the murder. Frank's family reported that recently Frank had become concerned that Scott was assuming a father role with his children.

Frank Lunkley had no prior criminal record.

Scott Boardman is survived by a four-year-old son from a previous relationship.

May 2**Amanda Ausloos**

29 years old

Nicholas Krause

23 years old

Mukwonago**Waukesha County**

Amanda Ausloos died on the floor of her son's bedroom after being beaten and shot multiple times by Timothy Husk, 32, her estranged boyfriend and business partner. Timothy also killed her employee, Nicholas Krause, 23 and himself. Her ten-year-old son and another employee ran to safety from the home, where the business was located.

Amanda was attempting to end a six-year on-again/off-again relationship with Timothy. They co-owned the business where Nicholas was employed as a carpenter.

Timothy shot his way in the back door while Amanda was cooking dinner and chased her as she ran into her son's bedroom to get away from him. He shot her once while she was on her knees and then began to beat and kick her. It appears that Amanda struggled with him because the following shots were fired while Timothy was also on the floor. Nicholas was shot under his arm, apparently after he lifted it in self-defense. After the shootings, Timothy engaged police in a long standoff, killing himself when the SWAT team entered the home. He left a four-page note for family and friends, giving instructions on possessions and explaining his reasons for his actions.

Prior to the homicide, there were numerous times when Timothy was violent toward Amanda. In one contact with authorities, Amanda reported that Timothy had swung her around the kitchen by her wrists; courthouse staff observed Timothy pinning Amanda to the wall in the courthouse following a meeting regarding that incident. In a restraining order petition filed a week before her death, Amanda stated that Timothy had swung a hammer as if he were going to strike her in the face with it. In her request she stated, "I fear for my employees' safety and my own." On April 30, a hearing for the temporary restraining order was held and continued. Timothy had not yet been served with the temporary restraining order at the time of the murders.

Amanda is survived by her ten-year-old son.

May 15**Judith Kempinger**

61 years old

Town of Menasha**Winnebago County**

Judith Kempinger was shot in the head while she slept by her husband, Larry Kempinger, 62, who then turned the gun on himself. Larry and Judith both died in their bedroom, with Larry's body blocking the locked door. Larry had used a 12-gauge shotgun to shoot them both in the head.

Larry had recently received a diagnosis of lymphoma, which his doctors viewed as treatable. No note was found and there was no indication that Judith was part of planning the incident. There was no known history of prior domestic violence in their relationship.

Judith is survived by two adult children.

June 10

Grace Tyson
47 years old

**Superior
Douglas County**

Grace Tyson was killed by her live-in boyfriend, Daniel Mattison, 55. Daniel struck her several times in the head with a baseball bat while she lay on the couch and then suffocated her with a pillow.

Grace and Daniel had been together for three to four years and were living together for about six months. Grace had asked Daniel to move out of the residence by July 1. Reportedly on the night of the murder, Grace had again told Daniel that he had to leave. There had been no previous reports of domestic violence, however, family members indicate that Grace was a strong, proud woman who might not have disclosed any abuse if it occurred.

In the weeks leading up to the homicide, Daniel had been fired from his job, lost his belongings from storage due to lack of payment and was arrested for driving while intoxicated.

The night of the murder, Daniel was arguing with Grace. Daniel stepped outside and as he returned he saw a small wooden bat and took it into the living room. He struck Grace several times on the head with the baseball bat as she lay on the couch. Grace struggled for her life as he then climbed on top of her and suffocated her with a pillow.

Later he called his adult daughter, asked her to come over to the house and confessed to the murder. He fled and eluded police for two days before being captured.

Daniel Mattison initially pled not guilty to First Degree Intentional Homicide. The Friday before his trial was to begin he changed his plea to no contest and was sentenced to life in prison with no parole eligibility for at least 20 years.

Grace is survived by her adult daughters.

June 13**James Thomas**
41 years old**Milwaukee**
Milwaukee County

James Thomas was fatally stabbed by his girlfriend Shawn Palmer, 47, during an argument. On the day of the homicide, James went out drinking and left Shawn at home with no car. When he got home they started to argue and he began to strangle her. She said he grabbed a steak knife and started to poke her in the body causing her pain. He continued to strangle her and hold the knife to her body. She managed to break away from him but he then blocked the exit. He still had a knife and was coming after her, so she picked up a different knife and warned him to stop. He continued to approach her and she stabbed him once in the chest causing his death.

James and Shawn knew each other for six years and lived together for the past year. James was physically and mentally abusive toward Shawn. He tried to control her life and would not let her see any family members without his permission. Investigative authorities determined the homicide occurred in self-defense and no charges were filed against Shawn Palmer.

June 15**Mary S. King**
45 years old**Milwaukee**
Milwaukee County

Mary S. King was shot and killed by her husband, Thomas King, 48. She was shot in the head on the couch while they were watching movies. After he killed her, Thomas reported that he tried to kill himself with the gun but the chamber jammed. He then took a bottle of Vicodin and fell asleep. When he woke up, he crawled to the upstairs apartment and called for help.

Thomas had tried to kill himself the week before the homicide. On the night of the homicide, he took the gun that they hide under their mattress and put in under the cushion of the couch. According to Thomas, when he pulled out the gun, Mary asked him what he was doing. He pointed the gun at her and told her it was none of her business and to shut up. They then struggled over the gun and Mary was shot in her left temple.

According to family members, Thomas was very controlling and abusive and had threatened to kill one of his daughters. After the homicide, Thomas was court ordered not to contact his three children.

Thomas King was charged with First Degree Reckless Homicide which was amended to Homicide by Dangerous Weapon/Explosive. He was found guilty of the amended charge and sentenced to four years in prison with four years extended supervision.

Mary is survived by her three children.

June 23**Lloyd Gentry**

15 years old

Michael Gentry

18 years old

Madison**Dane County**

Lloyd and Michael Gentry were shot to death by their stepfather, Roger O'Neal, 42. He shot each of them once, killing them instantly.

Roger had been married to Lloyd and Michael's mother for fourteen years. At the time of the murders, she was in Chicago to be with her family dealing with the imminent death of her sister from cancer. While she was in Chicago, Roger repeatedly called his wife demanding that she return home. She declined and waited with her siblings as her sister died. She then told him when she would return home. Roger killed her two sons before she arrived.

Lloyd was upstairs taking a shower when his stepfather entered the bathroom and shot him once in the head. Roger came down the stairs, passing his own son in the stairwell, and headed outside where Roger's three stepsons and cousin waited for Lloyd. He pointed the rifle at his 21-year-old stepson and pulled the trigger but was unable to fire the rifle. He then reloaded the chamber and shot Michael in the neck. The others began to run away from the house as Roger fired one more shot, missing them.

He retreated into his home where a 13 hour standoff ensued. More than 50 officers, including a SWAT team, surrounded the house and sent two volleys of tear gas into the house, forcing Roger to surrender.

Roger was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and depression in 2001. Roger has a prior criminal record including one charge of battery to his wife in 1990 and disorderly conduct against his 20-year-old stepson in 2002. At the trial, his wife testified that about four months before the shooting she and Roger had discussed divorce and Roger had moved into his own bedroom, agreeing to leave by June or July.

The jury rejected Roger's insanity plea and found him guilty of two counts of First Degree Intentional Homicide and one count of First Degree Recklessly Endangering Safety. The prosecutor speculated that the jury believed Roger acted out of revenge towards his wife because she wanted a divorce. He was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences with five additional consecutive years followed by two years of extended supervision.

June 29**Neil
Loewenhagen**
45 years old**Alma
Buffalo County**

Neil Loewenhagen died from gunshots to the chest and head fired by Brian Culpitt, 39, who was angry that Neil accompanied his estranged wife home from a dance. At the time of the murder, Brian and his estranged wife had been separated for three months. Their two daughters, ages 16 and ten, visited their father every other weekend and were asleep, alone in Brian's apartment at the time of the shooting.

Brian's estranged wife and Neil had attended a dance out of town and returned home at approximately 2:00 a.m. with her two juvenile nephews. Brian was hiding in trees on the property and began to fight with her and Neil. He then shot Neil in the chest and head. He later shot himself as his estranged wife tried to dissuade him. Her nephews witnessed the homicide. There was no known history of violence between the couple and Brian did not have a criminal history.

Neil Loewenhagen is survived by two sons.

July 3**Cynthia Noll**
56 years old**Farmington
Waupaca County**

Raymond Noll, 58, called 911 and said that he had just shot his wife, Cynthia Noll. He then killed himself before the police arrived. The 911 dispatcher heard the gunshot. Police found Cynthia and Raymond dead in their bedroom.

According to newspaper reports, there was no known previous history of domestic violence. Raymond's family indicated that he had recently suffered from depression and was worried about financial matters. His family thought the depression had recently appeared to improve.

Cynthia Noll is survived by two adult children.

July 5**Nicole J.
Odegaard**
29 years old**New Hope
Portage County**

Nicole J. Odegaard was shot multiple times in the head by her husband, Jay Odegaard, 44, in the bedroom of their home. He then turned the gun on himself. Their bodies were found by Nicole's 8 and 10-year-old children and their 9-year-old friend who was sleeping over at the house that night.

According to co-workers of Nicole, on the night of the homicide, Jay and the kids had pizza at the tavern where Nicole was working. Jay left with the children at 11:00 p.m. and returned by himself about 45 minutes later. He argued with Nicole about when she would get off of work. She was overheard to say that "she didn't love him and was tired of being beaten." Co-workers reported seeing bruises on Nicole in the past.

Jay Odegaard had a history of previous convictions for disorderly conduct, felony battery and false imprisonment.

Nicole is survived by her two children, ages 8 and 10.

July 31**Michael Pisarek**
13 years old**Town of Troy**
Walworth County

Michael Pisarek was shot and killed by his father, Michael E. Pisarek, 53, who then committed suicide. The murder/suicide occurred the day before a divorce hearing between Michael E. Pisarek and his wife. They had been married for fourteen years and Michael was their only child together.

During the process of getting a divorce, Michael E's wife had rented an apartment and she and Michael, her son, stayed there when needed. On the day of the homicide, she was packing to go to her apartment with Michael because the court date was the next day. She planned to be gone before Michael E. got home from work. She was putting clothes in the car when her husband arrived. She went inside and told her son his dad was home and they needed to leave. Michael got in the car and as his mom tried to go downstairs to leave, Michael E. grabbed her, put her in a chokehold and said "I can snap your neck real easy." She could not call for help since the phone service had been cut off, so she started screaming. Her son, Michael, came upstairs to confront his father. Michael E. put them both into a headlock, one in each arm. He ordered his wife to lay on the floor and put her hands behind her head. She felt that if she did he would kill her. She was able to break free and ran from the house. She thought her son would be able to break free as well. As she neared the driveway she heard two shots.

In 1994 Michael E. Pisarek was arrested for domestic violence and the charges were dismissed under a deferred prosecution agreement when he agreed to go to counseling.

August 3**Tanya Meyer-Garcia**
24 years old**Sheboygan**
Sheboygan County

Tanya Meyer-Garcia was shot and killed in her apartment by her boyfriend, Shannon Thiel, 28, who then committed suicide. She was 18 weeks pregnant at the time of the homicide and the fetus did not survive. Tanya's roommate found the bodies.

After the homicide, friends and family of Shannon reported that Shannon and Tanya had broken up and recently gotten back together. Shannon was also described as a hothead who was jealous and had stalked Tanya. In the months prior to the homicide, he had talked to friends about having suicidal thoughts and had indicated that if he were to kill Tanya, he would kill himself too.

Shannon Thiel left a suicide note in which he blamed Tanya for causing him to kill them both.

Tanya is survived by two young children who were with her ex-husband at the time of the homicide.

August 9**Karen Flechner**
46 years oldWest Allis
Milwaukee County

Karen Flechner died after being shot to death in the living room of her home by her husband, Robert Flechner, 48. Robert shot Karen in the chest and then killed himself. Their 19-year-old son found their bodies and called the police. Neighbors reported seeing Robert arguing with Karen on the front porch earlier that evening.

Karen and Robert had been married almost 25 years. Karen wanted a divorce and they were in the process of separating at the time of the murder/suicide. Family members portray Robert as very controlling of Karen. He would also verbally attack Karen and her weight, and often accuse her of infidelity. In the year before her death, Karen had begun working, had lost 85-90 lbs. and developed new relationships. Robert was depressed about the separation.

Karen and Robert had separated once, early in their marriage. Family members report that Robert threatened suicide at that time if Karen did not reconcile and kept a gun in a nightstand near the bed. Karen had told a family member that Robert had threatened her life and that she feared he would kill her. Approximately six weeks prior to the murder/suicide, Robert had attempted suicide by cutting his wrists and stabbing himself. He told a family member afterward that he thought the suicide attempt had brought Karen and him closer together.

Neighbors and family members confirmed that Robert had heated verbal arguments with Karen, but they were not aware of any physical abuse. According to their daughter, Robert's control had escalated in the weeks just before the homicide. Robert and Karen's teenage son had hidden his father's gun and the key to his guncase, and their teenage daughter had left the home to stay with her aunt to avoid the abuse. Following the suicide attempt, Robert had been ordered to see a counselor and was to return to work two days after his death.

Karen is survived by her young adult son and teenage daughter.

September 4**Tamera Foster**
29 years oldFairfield
Sauk County

Tamera Foster was shot by her husband, Bruce Foster, 30, who then shot himself. Bruce had driven them to a wildlife preserve and called 911 after shooting Tamera in the head but before shooting himself. The couple were still alive when police arrived but despite rescue efforts they later died at the hospital.

At the time of the murder/suicide, Tamera was living with her father who was sick. In July, Bruce received mental health services related to depression and suicide. He was distraught over the loss of their infant twin sons three years prior and indicated that Tamera was talking about needing her freedom. In his suicide note, he stated that life without the boys was too hard and that this is what Tamera wanted.

There was no known history of domestic violence in the relationship.

September 24

Kirk Bickham Jr.

22 years old

Deshawn Windbush

22 years old

Carl Hall

24 years old

Milwaukee

Milwaukee County

Kirk Bickham Jr., Deshawn Windbush and Carl Hall were shot to death by Jaki Marion, 30, in the parking lot outside of a tavern.

On the evening of September 23rd, Jaki met his girlfriend at a tavern. Later, in the early morning of September 24th, Kirk, Deshawn and Carl came into the tavern. Jaki exchanged words with them about his girlfriend and Jaki then called his brother, asking him to bring his gun to the bar.

Kirk, Deshawn and Carl headed out to their car when the tavern closed. Jaki and his girlfriend were also in the parking lot near the car. At this point, derogatory comments were made about her. She grabbed Jaki's arm and said they should go. Jaki then threw her to the ground. He pulled out his gun and shot Kirk, Deshawn and Carl. The prosecution believed that the murders were provoked by Jaki's jealousy over a relationship his girlfriend had had with Kirk Bickman.

One month earlier Jaki's girlfriend petitioned for a temporary restraining order against him. In her petition, she stated that "he was going to shot me and beat up whatever guy I'm with and shot him also. [sic]" The temporary restraining order was dismissed on August 26th for failure to appear.

Jaki Marion was charged with three counts of First Degree Intentional Homicide, found guilty by a jury and sentenced to three consecutive terms of life in prison.

September 28**Anthony LaPorte**
39 years old**Williams Bay**
Walworth County

Anthony LaPorte was stabbed to death by his wife, Carol LaPorte, 33, in the condominium where they were vacationing. The evening of the homicide, Anthony and Carol spent part of the evening at a local bar. Witnesses stated Carol acted “obnoxious” at the bar and Anthony had a confrontation with a man after Carol moved his drink. Anthony and Carol then had an argument and Anthony left the bar an hour before Carol. She returned to the condominium complex with a friend who lived in the complex. The friend reported that three to four minutes after leaving Carol, she heard her screaming.

Carol stated that when she entered the condominium, Anthony grabbed her on the arm and around the neck and spun her around. She stated that she tried to leave and he stopped her and she was afraid he would choke her. She picked up a knife and he lunged toward her. When she called 911 she told the dispatcher that her husband tried to hit her so she hit him with a knife. Carol called her sister and when the police arrived Carol and her sister were performing CPR on Anthony. During the trial, the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner testified that her explanation for how Anthony was killed was not plausible.

Carol LaPorte was charged with First Degree Reckless Homicide and Aggravated Battery and was convicted in a jury trial in April, 2005. Her sentencing hearing is scheduled for September 22, 2005.

Anthony is survived by two daughters, ages 2 and 5.

October 1**Melissa**
Elderbrook
24 years old**Milwaukee**
Milwaukee County

Melissa Elderbrook was shot to death by her cousin/boyfriend, Chad Whitmore, 34, in their shared home. Chad shot Melissa 12 to 13 times in the chest with a semi-automatic handgun.

On the night of the homicide, Chad had been drinking. They were watching television when Melissa asked Chad if he wanted to pray about a house they were trying to sell. Melissa followed holistic healing and used fairy cards, similar to Tarot cards, for guidance. They argued about the meaning of a card that Melissa had drawn and Chad shot her. He shot her continuously until his gun jammed.

A restraining order had been filed against Chad by a woman in 1993 but their relationship could not be determined by the records.

Chad Whitmore was initially charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide. He pled guilty to First Degree Reckless Homicide and was sentenced to 35 years in prison with 25 years extended supervision.

October 12

LeRoy Copen

56 years old

Lynn Copen

55 years old

Kenosha

Kenosha County

LeRoy and Lynn Copen were killed when Jay L. Gonzalez, 30, crashed into the back of their car, which was waiting at a stoplight. Gonzalez was being pursued by police following an assault and abduction of his former girlfriend. After amicably having drinks with his former girlfriend, he suddenly began making threats as they drove away and stated he was going to kill them both.

An off-duty police officer saw the woman screaming and trying to get out of the car and called 911. When an on-duty patrol car tried to pull Jay's car over, he told her he would kill them both and then accelerated and crashed into the back of the Copen vehicle, causing it to burst into flames.

LeRoy Copen had been in the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department for 25 years, serving on the Tactical Response Team, Emergency Services Coordinator and a liaison for courthouse security. Lynn Copen was the first female police officer in Tomah, Wisconsin and Victim-Witness Coordinator in the Kenosha County District Attorney's Office for 22 years.

Jay L. Gonzalez was charged with two counts of First Degree Intentional Homicide, one count of First Degree Attempted Homicide, Fleeing a Law Enforcement Officer, False Imprisonment, Causing Great Bodily Harm by Use of a Vehicle, and Intoxicated Use of a Vehicle. He pled no contest to Homicide by Intoxicated Use of a Vehicle and two counts of First Degree Reckless Homicide. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison and 11 years of extended supervision upon his release.

LeRoy and Lynn Copen are survived by one adult son.

October 19

Bruce Williams

38 year old

Green Lake

Green Lake County

Bruce Williams, a Green Lake County Sheriff's Deputy, was shot five times as he arrived at an apartment complex in response to a domestic violence call. Aric Tonn, 21, shot an AK-47 from the balcony of the apartment he shared with his wife and two small children. Prior to the homicide, Aric spanked one of the children and his wife asked him to stop. He then hit his wife in the face, knocking her backwards into a chair. She called the police and Aric told her to leave with the children. She was putting the children in the car outside when the shooting began.

Deputy Williams, a law enforcement officer for 14 years, and his partner were the first to respond to the scene. They were establishing a parameter around the building due to the fact that they believed Aric had weapons. Deputy Williams was wearing protective body armor, but Aric shot him four times in areas not covered by the vest.

Aric then held police off for 12 hours, during which he shot blindly from a bedroom. The stand-off ended when the SWAT team entered Aric's apartment and found him dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Aric and his wife had recently moved to Green Lake from Oshkosh with their child and his wife's child from a previous relationship. Police stated they had numerous contacts with him, but he had no previous criminal convictions.

Bruce Williams is survived by three young children.

October 31**Mannix
Franklin, Sr.**
31 years old**Milwaukee
Milwaukee County**

Mannix Franklin, Sr. was fatally shot by a Milwaukee Police Officer in a driveway one block from his home. Police were called to the Franklin home by his wife who said she had a no contact order against Mannix and that he had just entered her home and was harassing her. When police arrived, he ran from the house and was pursued on foot and by car. Mannix was killed after police say he put a hand inside his jacket, refused commands to take it out, made a motion as though he were attempting to pull something out of his pocket and continued to approach the officer after he was ordered to stop. He suffered six gunshot wounds. Mannix was unarmed.

Mannix was on probation for a disorderly conduct conviction from March 2003. Conditions of the probation included that he have no contact with his wife without her consent and Mannix's probation agent's consent. He also had numerous criminal convictions for domestic abuse related incidents involving his wife. A couple of weeks before the homicide, Mannix had been warned by his probation agent that any further violations of his probation conditions would result in revocation of probation and his incarceration. Six days before the homicide, police responded to calls reporting that Mannix had broken a window on a door at his wife's residence. He fled the scene before the police arrived.

Mannix's wife disputed the police account and asked the Milwaukee County District Attorney to investigate the death. The Attorney General's office acted as a special prosecutor in reviewing Mannix's homicide and found no probable cause that the officer committed any crime.

Mannix is survived by four children.

November 15**Kristy Jo Szentes**
35 years old**Brookfield
Waukesha County**

Kristy Jo Szentes was killed after being shot multiple times by Ihor B. Tanin, 45, who then killed himself. Kristy and Ihor had been a couple for 15 years, having met at the music store that their family members ran together. Kristy was only 20 years old when she began living with Ihor and helped him raise his three children. His 17-year-old daughter found their bodies in their home.

The couple had gone out with friends that night, who saw nothing amiss in their interaction. Friends and family knew that Kristy was trying to end the relationship but she was concerned about Ihor's feelings and trying to be sensitive.

Kristy is survived by Ihor's three children, 16, 17 and 22. She raised these children as her own.

November 25**Miranda Reichert**

26 years old

Cara Reichert

3 years old

A.J. Reichert

2 years old

**Tomahawk
Lincoln County**

Miranda Reichert and her two small children, Cara and A.J. were all lying in their pajamas when they were shot to death by William Reichert, 27, who then took his own life. William shot Miranda once in the head, while she lay on a double bed with Cara, who he shot twice in the head. A.J. was lying on an adjacent futon bed and his father also shot him twice in the head. William's body was found on the floor, with the gun lying nearby. The bodies were discovered by William's mother, who lived next door and had come over to wake Miranda and the children from their regular afternoon nap.

Miranda and William were married for four years. Miranda's family members reported there were problems in the marriage. Miranda told family that William had "mood swings" and a "temper" but never reported that William had been abusive to her or the children. She had talked of divorce and one newspaper reported that a family member reported threats by William. The young couple had financial difficulties and a suicide note left by William spoke of arguing. The suicide note indicated that William had been thinking about killing his family for some time.

December 6**Sarah Hicks**

22 years old

**Milwaukee
Milwaukee County**

Sarah Hicks was fatally beaten by her boyfriend, James Tillman, 37. She died from at least nine separate blows to her head by a metal pole. James was at Sarah's apartment on December 5th. Sarah's father asked James to leave, and escorted him out, since he was drunk and Sarah told him that James had hit her. James returned around 1:00 a.m. on December 6th. Sarah told him that she did not want to see him anymore and that her father said he couldn't come back here. Sarah then got up from the couch and walked toward her bedroom when James picked up a pole and attacked her. Her two-year-old son was present at the homicide.

Her father saw James leave the house in Sarah's car, and went to check on Sarah. He found her face down on the bed, her head covered in blood. She was later declared dead at the hospital.

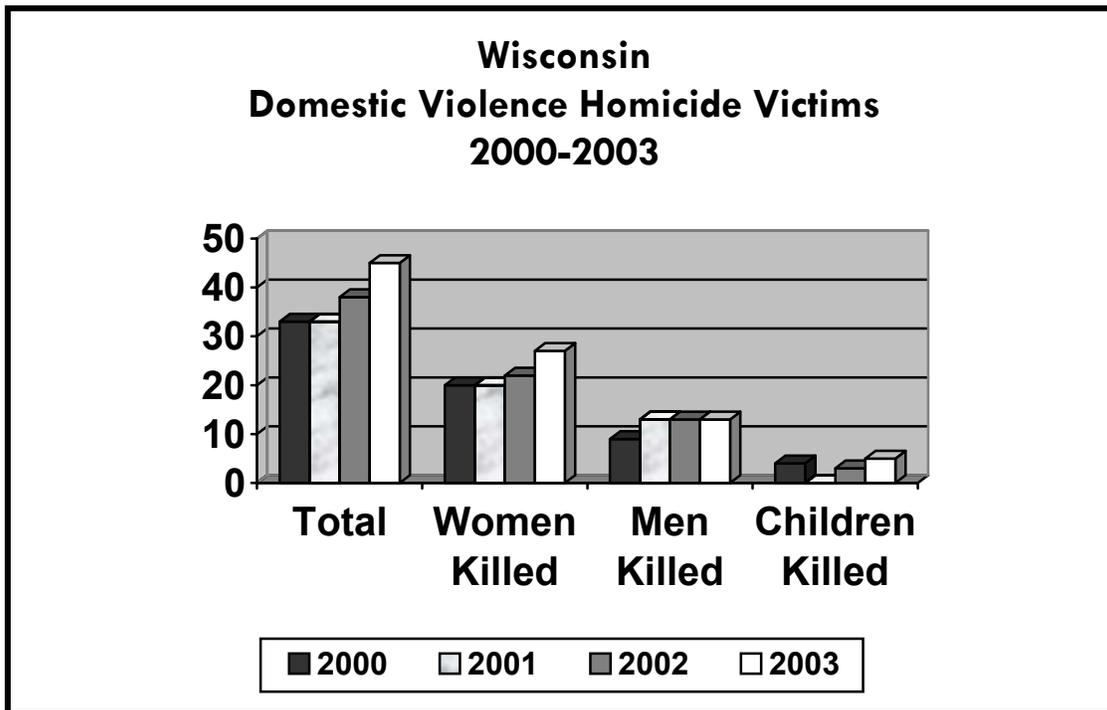
James had a history of domestic violence in a previous relationship. Sarah's family was concerned for her safety and had gotten her the apartment upstairs from her father so she would be safe.

James Tillman was charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

Sarah is survived by her five-year-old daughter and two-year-old son.

Comparison Data for Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Reports Four Year Comparison (2000—2003)

Through the past four years of analysis, WCADV has been able to evaluate, compare and collate the data we have collected and to also gather additional information on cases we had missed in years past. We have reclassified and recalculated some of the annual figures. The following charts compare elements of the data that we have collected regarding domestic homicides from 2000-2003 in Wisconsin.



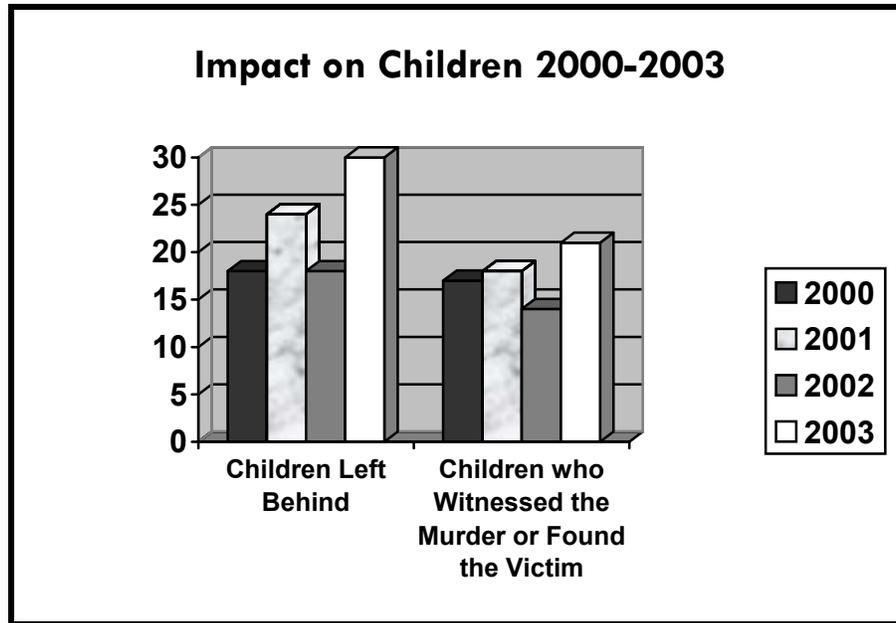
Between 2000 and 2003, 149 people were killed in domestic violence related incidents: 89 (60%) were adult women, 48 (32%) were adult men and 12 (8%) were children under the age of 18. For this report, children were identified as victims of domestic violence homicide when they were killed with their parent in a domestic violence incidents, were killed in teen dating violence homicides or were killed as an extension of or in response to ongoing abuse between intimate partners.



Overall, we identified 149 people who were murdered in domestic violence-related homicides between 2000-2003. One hundred and eight of them were currently or previously in an intimate relationship with the person who murdered them. For the graph above, we chose to compare the number of intimate partner homicide victims (108) with the number of these victims who had separated from or were in the process of leaving their abusive partner prior to the homicide (53).



Between 2000-2003, we examined the deaths of 41 people who were killed as the result of domestic violence, although they had never been in an intimate relationship with the person who killed them. For 39 of these people, domestic violence perpetrators killed them in an attempt to seek control over their intimate partner or in some cases of abuse in later life, an adult child killed their parent. In two additional incidents, law enforcement were driven to fatally shoot perpetrators to protect themselves or others.



For many children of the domestic violence homicides detailed in this report, and in past reports, prior violence preceded the homicide. They had lived with ongoing terror.

We chose to detail two categories: *Children Left Behind* - those children under 18 who were made motherless, fatherless or orphaned by the homicide - and *Children who Witnessed the Murder or Found the Victim* - any children under 18 who were at the scene of the homicide and all children (including adults) of the homicide victims who found their dead parent(s).

Between 2000 - 2003, 90 children under 18 were left behind by the domestic violence homicide. Seventy children witnessed the murder or found the victim. During this same period, seven children were killed along with their parent in the homicide incident.

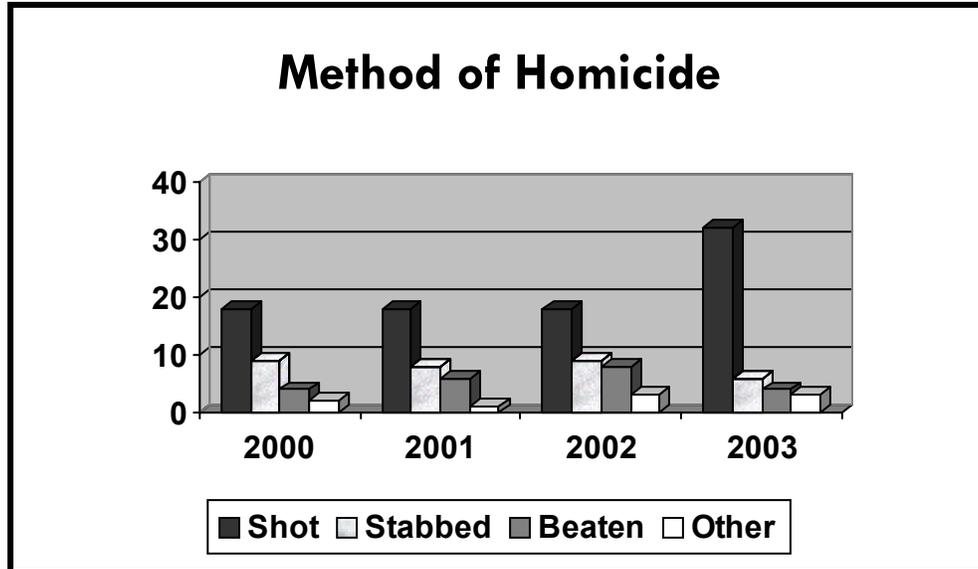
**Race/Ethnicity of Homicide Victims and Perpetrators
All Years (2000 - 2003) and 2003**

	Total All Years		2003	
	Victims	Perpetrators	Victims	Perpetrators
Caucasian	98	79	32	25
African American	46	43	13	9
American Indian	2	2	0	0
Asian	0	0	0	0
Latino	0	8	0	2
Unknown	3	1	0	0
Total	149	133	45	36

**Age of Homicide Victims and Perpetrators
All Years (2000 - 2003) and 2003**

	Total All Years		2003	
	Victims	Perpetrators	Victims	Perpetrators
0 - 6 years	5	0	3	0
7 - 17 years	7	4	2	0
18 - 29 years	41	33	14	6
30 - 49 years	68	73	20	24
Over 50 years	28	23	6	6
Total	149	133	45	36

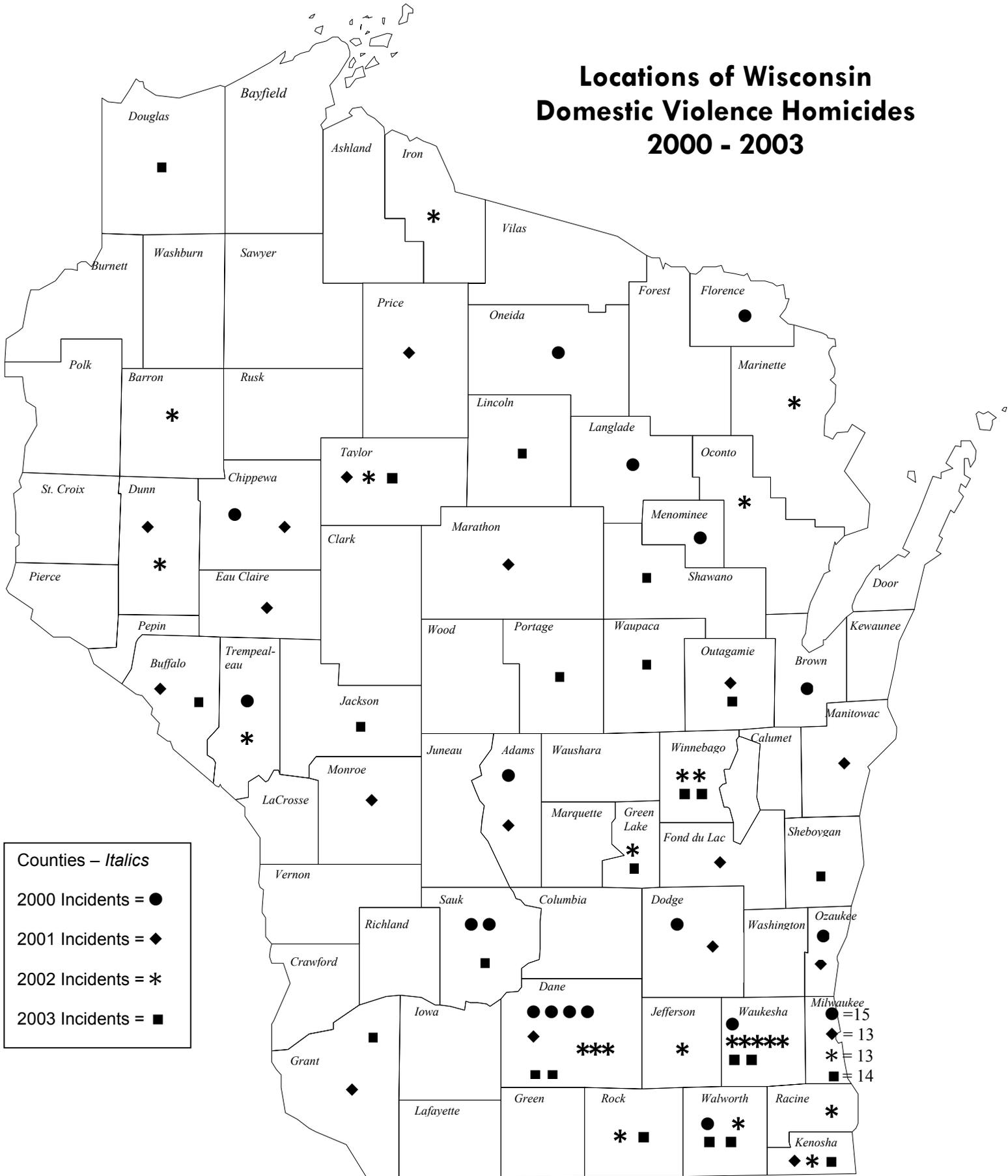
During 2000 - 2003, there were 149 victims of domestic violence-related homicides. Twelve (12) of the domestic violence homicide incidents resulted in multiple victims; 10 were double homicides and two were triple homicides.. In two incidents, law enforcement officers fatally shot offenders and therefore are not included in the total perpetrator count reflected in these



The domestic violence homicides that occurred between 2000 - 2003 involved three main methods of killing - victims were shot, stabbed or beaten. The category of other is created to include additional means of killing including vehicular homicide, intentional overdose and neglect. At times, perpetrators used multiple means to kill their victims and in these instances, we categorized the killing method based on the ultimate act that caused the victim's death.

Of the 149 people who were killed in domestic violence related homicides, 86 (58%) were shot, 32 (21%) were stabbed, 22 (15%) were beaten and 9 (6%) were killed with other means.

Locations of Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicides 2000 - 2003





**307 South Paterson Street, Suite 1
Madison, WI 53703
Phone (608) 255-0539
Fax (608) 255-3560
www.wcadv.org**