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Victims can get on their feet with help from CAPSA

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The Community Abuse Prevention Services Agency has been providing shelter and help for domestic violence victims for more than 30 years in Cache Valley and is now expanding its services with the help of federal funding.

In 1976, a few rapes occurred on the USU campus. Women in the community who felt that something needed to be done rallied together and formed the Cache Valley Rape Crisis Team. Now, after several years of helping shelter victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, they help more than 130 women each year, said Jill Anderson, CAPSA executive director.

CAPSA provides a safety shelter for the abused where victims can live for no more than 30 days. Eight rooms and 32 beds are available as well as two small kitchens to cook food provided by the shelter.

Sixteen shelters are located throughout the state, and 98 percent of the victims housed in Cache Valley are women. Last year, 138 women, six men and 227 children were sheltered in Cache Valley alone.

CAPSA's shelter also has a play room and a local teacher to help tutor the older children every day.

The shelter is also working toward a new program called the Transitional Housing Program. CAPSA is working with this program because the staff realized 30 days in the shelter was not long enough for victims to get on their feet.

"What we found was about half of the women that left our shelter kind of get stuck in a survival mode - low paying jobs and that kind of thing - so we started Transitional Housing Program," Anderson said.

Through the program, which Anderson said is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, former victims can find a home. Once a home is decided upon, Anderson said the former victim is then required to pay 30 percent of the rent. The remainder is then subsidized by CAPSA.

"The goal of that is to help them achieve a lifelong asset, and most commonly that's secondary education or post-secondary education," she said.

Since the program began in March 2006, a couple of women have finished up two years at the university and have been able to stabilize their income, Anderson said.

The client's self-esteem is also increased through financial assistance and education, she said.

"They just get excited about it, and their self-esteem skyrockets and it's something that they never thought of," Anderson added.

The most interesting thing CAPSA has seen is the change in home life, she said. Anderson said that as

the mother succeeds and accomplishes goals, the children also become motivated and successful in their school work.

A separate support group is also available for women at the Cache County jail. The class mainly deals with alcohol abuse and how it relates to physical abuse.

"A lot of women are there for drug and alcohol abuse reasons, and they abuse drugs and alcohol because of the abuse they have experienced," Anderson said.

In addition to the shelter, CAPSA also provides other services such as a 24-hour crisis hotline, individual counseling services, domestic violence support groups, and rape and sexual assault case workers for legal issues.

The counseling services can help with protective orders and stalking injunctions.

Support groups are held weekly in English and Spanish. For questions call 752-4493. For help concerning sexual assault, call the crisis line at 753-2500. This line is available 24 hours a day. Students can also visit the Web site at www.CAPSA.org.

CAPSA is mainly for the community, but the university has also set up a service for students, the Sexual Assault and Anti-Violence Information office. Located in the Wellness Center, north of Romney Stadium, students can go talk with counselors and receive help from case workers about possible stalking and domestic violence.

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