



Sherri Barber/The Coloradoan

**Vicki Lutz**, executive director of Crossroads Safehouse, a safe haven for victims of domestic violence, on Monday announces two grants from the Department of Justice.

# Funds for female victims of violence set to expire

By SARA REED

When Rhiannon McCabe landed at Denver International Airport in November 2001, she and her two sons had everything they owned packed in two suitcases.

Lethal and deadly were two of the words the 33-year-old used to describe the situation "back East," one that forced her to leave her home and her identity behind to flee from a violent ex-husband.

## Facts about domestic violence, places to get help

Page A2

While her situation looked bleak, a safehouse and a federal act that funnels money to protect women who are victims brightened her future.

"If we stayed, we would have lost our lives," she said. "We had to pick a

place we'd never been before, where we didn't have any family connections."

After about four months at the Crossroads Safehouse, McCabe had problems finding a place to live. Because she left all of her identification behind so her ex-husband couldn't find her, she couldn't work.

"I knew I couldn't afford \$700, \$800 a month (for rent)," she said. "It

See VICTIMS/Page A2

## Victims

Continued from Page A1

was totally out of my ballpark. I didn't know if I'd have to pack up and go back home."

Even though the danger remained if she returned home, McCabe said she was ready to do it.

"It was between that and being homeless," she said. "I didn't want to do that to my kids."

When a unit opened up in Alternatives to Violence's transitional housing program, McCabe stayed there for two years.

"It was lifesaving," she said.

Women often return to their abusers after their stay at Crossroads because they have no money and nowhere else to go, said executive director Vicki Lutz. That's when the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, steps in.

Now, with a nearly \$175,000 grant from VAWA, Crossroads and Alternatives to Violence are partnering with the city of Fort Collins and other local groups to open eight more transitional housing units in the city.

There are only 50 such units in the state, two of them in Fort Collins.

"We are excited to bring these critically needed units to our community," Lutz said.

The Violence Against Women Act, set to expire at the end of this month, makes these many lifesaving programs possible for women. Program directors say it is imperative that Congress reauthorize the act to keep the funding coming.

Agencies such as Crossroads, Alternatives to Violence and Estes Valley Victim Advocates would be big losers if VAWA is not reauthorized.

The act, originally passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, gives federal money to local agencies to fund and provide, among other services, legal representation in protection order, child custody and other cases; emergency shelter services; transitional housing; and victim advocacy programs.

The rate of intimate partner violence dropped by nearly half between 1993 and 2001, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. That does not mean the funding is no longer needed, said Alison Hade, executive director for Alternatives to Violence.

This year, four women have been killed by a partner — Sara Sherwood in Fort Collins, Jennifer Jarvis in Loveland and two women in Weld County — Hade said.

"It shows the federal government has a stake in ending partner violence," Hade said, noting

## Local resources for victims of violence

- partners in 2000: 1,247
- Number of assaults in the nation on women by intimate partners in 1993 (per 1,000 population): 9.8
- Number of assaults in the nation on women by intimate partners in 2001 (per 1,000 population): 5
- Amount of state-appropriated Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grants in Colorado: More than \$1.7 million
- Amount of federally appropriated VAWA grants in Colorado: More than \$3.45 million

### By the numbers

- Number of women in the nation killed by intimate partners in 1993: 1,581
- Number of women in the nation killed by intimate

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Coloradoan research

there is "no real" state funding available for these types of programs.

Crossroads, Alternatives to Violence, Estes Valley Victim Advocates and other regional groups also partnered on a nearly \$320,000 VAWA grant to provide free legal service to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in northwestern Colorado.

The money will pay for two lawyers, an administrator to help women in child custody

cases, divorces, protection orders, child support and other legal matters, Lutz said.

The money will also go toward the purchase of a domestic violence resource vehicle to be used as a mobile office so services can be brought to women who don't have transportation, Lutz said.

Alternatives to Violence partnered with Crossroads for the most recent grant. About 2 percent of its total budget

comes from VAWA funding, Hade said, and that money is used for bilingual advocacy and its volunteer response team.

In addition to the two most recent grants, Crossroads receives \$30,000 a year for its Domestic Assault Response Team, Lutz said, which is three-quarters of the funding for that program.

The Larimer County District Attorney's Office receives about \$35,000 to fund a victim advocate for adult women in its Loveland office, according to Jane Bradley, victim witness coordinator.

There are two versions of the VAWA reauthorization bill working through Congress. The bill in the House of Representatives would allot \$3.938 billion during the next five years, and the Senate bill would allot \$3.947 billion during the next five years.

Colorado Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, a Republican who awarded the two VAWA grants to Crossroads, Alternatives to Violence and Estes Valley Victim Advocates during a Monday, said reauthorization of the act was crucial.

"These are people in desperate need," she said. "They (women and children) are members of society who are very vulnerable."