

Activists rally against domestic violence

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At Capitol gathering, people urged to speak out against abuse

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Activists against domestic violence gathered at the state Capitol Monday, holding up 42 silhouettes of faces - a stark reminder of the toll abuse has taken in Colorado this year.

"Violence in our relationship and community is not acceptable," said Trish Thibodo, executive director for the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "It's closer than you think."

The advocacy group, along with survivors and government, officials kicked off Domestic Violence Awareness Month at a rally, urging people to speak out about domestic abuse.

Survivors read poems detailing instances of abuse, and crowd members held posters describing loved ones they lost.

"I'm still in danger," said Tralita Alderman, who said her former husband abused her and their three children for years.

"It (domestic violence) is highly overlooked. I hope this month brings it to light. The children are victims," she said.

Attorney General John Suthers urged employers to adopt domestic violence policies. Domestic violence cost U.S. companies up to \$5 billion each year in health-related costs and lost productivity, according to the coalition.

At the rally, Joe Kilgore spoke about his sister, Karen Rodriguez, and the complexity of domestic violence.

Rodriguez was convicted in August of 24 counts of sexual abuse against her son and daughter. Her ex-husband, Edward Rodriguez, was sentenced to 200 years in prison on two counts of sexual abuse against the same children.

She is expected to be sentenced this month.

"Victims don't look for abusers, abusers look for victims," Kilgore said. "All she ever wanted was a family."



Leandra Lipson, far right, holds up one of 42 silhouettes representing people killed in domestic abuse in Colorado so far this year, according to a domestic violence coalition. A rally was held Monday on the steps of the Colorado Capitol to kick off Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Karen Rodriguez's attorney argued in court she was a victim of domestic abuse and she feared Edward Rodriguez would kill the children if she did not help him.

"Karen was in survival mode," Kilgore said. "You cannot think clearly under that pressure. We did not live in her shoes."

Kilgore said Edward Rodriguez brainwashed his sister by slowly isolating her. As the years went by, Kilgore's phone calls to the Rodriguez home went unanswered and Christmas cards were returned.

"It happened under my nose for the past 15 years," Kilgore said. "Her daughter never met Uncle Joey."

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