Two Western New York Domestic Violence Service Providers to Share $150,000 in State Funding to Enhance Victim Services

New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence provides grants through the Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Fellowship

Family Justice Center of Erie County, Willow Domestic Violence Center of Greater Rochester will each use funding to hire a professional new to the field to help enhance services

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence today announced $150,000 in state funding for two domestic violence programs that will allow each to hire a professional new to the field to help enhance the services they provide for victims and survivors. The Family Justice Center of Erie County and the Willow Domestic Violence Center of Greater Rochester are recipients of the Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Fellowship, which will fund the salary and benefits for their respective fellow for two years.

The fellowship is designed to develop professionals to work in the domestic violence prevention and services field. Additional goals of the program are to foster collaboration between domestic violence programs and other services; collect information to inform policy and funding; and enhance the capacity of local programs to better meet their community’s needs. Now in its fifth year, the fellowship is named in memory of an Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence employee killed in a vehicle crash on her way home from work in 2001. Last year’s recipients were the Family of Woodstock (Ulster County) and Unity House (Rensselaer County).

The Family Justice Center and the Willow Domestic Violence Center each will receive up to $75,000 for two years to develop a work plan that will provide their respective fellows with a broad range of experience. Both fellows will attend an OPDV training before starting their jobs with the community-based organizations. The grant contract with each organization runs from Oct. 1, 2019, through Sept. 30, 2021.

The fellow at the Family Justice Center will use hands-on training to update the center’s new cutting-edge website, Reach Out (www.reachoutwny.org). The ReachOutNY.org initiative is aimed at expanding and improving domestic violence services for victims of teen dating violence living in Erie County. The Family Justice Center includes support locations in Buffalo, Orchard Park, Amherst and Grand Island.

Mary Travers-Murphy, Executive Director of the Family Justice Center of Erie County, said, “We are honored and thrilled to win this award, because we believe this new fellow will change lives. The FJC will be able to work more closely with teen dating abuse survivors and partner with parents, teachers and students in school settings to educate teens about abuse with resources and approaches designed specifically for their age group. We believe that the fellow holds the key to finally breaking the cycle of teen dating abuse in our schools and communities, and FJC’s job is to assist every step of the way.”

The Willow Domestic Violence Center’s fellow will provide trauma-informed, survivor-centered support to clients. They will also help identify the complex medical, legal and other critical
system barriers to services and resources. The fellow will be in a unique position to work with clients, staff and community partners at Willow Core program areas as well as throughout the community.

**Meaghan de Chateuvieux, President & CEO of Willow Domestic Violence Center, said:**
“We are so honored to receive the Ursula Forem Fellowship Award. The addition of a fellow to Willow Domestic Violence Center’s staff will improve our community’s response to domestic violence survivors by identifying areas of unmet need and strengthening our network of supports. We believe that the legacy of Ursula Forem herself will shine as this fellow works to help close the gaps in our community response and improve access for survivors.”

New York continues to expand its commitment to protecting victims and survivors of domestic violence. In May, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act, a bill that codifies more meaningful sentence reductions for domestic abuse survivors in the criminal justice system and a key initiative in the Governor's 2019 Women's Justice Agenda.

Earlier this year, the Governor announced legislation signed last summer to expand the assistance available for victims of hate crimes and certain other crimes associated with domestic violence who were not physically injured during the crime is now effective. In 2018, the Governor signed legislation that removed both handguns and long guns from the possession of domestic abusers.

The New York State Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline (1-800-942-6906) offers help and information 24 hours a day in English, Spanish and other languages. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can call 711. New York State also supports and funds community-based programs to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence and other crimes, including these Domestic Violence Resources.

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (www.opdv.ny.gov) has three primary areas of focus: to advise the Governor and Legislature on policies and practices for the state; to train professionals from all disciplines across the state about the intersection of domestic violence in their daily practice; and to serve as a resource regarding the issue of domestic violence by disseminating regular public awareness campaigns, publishing materials for use by non-profits and victims and highlighting best practices.