



SILENT WITNESS INITIATIVE

Community education is a vital component of the Piscataway DVCIT mission. For this reason, in an effort to raise awareness during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October, the DVCIT sponsors the Silent Witness Project.

This project began in Minnesota when a group of artists created an exhibit of life-sized silhouettes, each representing a murdered victim of domestic violence in their state. Because the murdered men and women no longer have a voice, the silhouettes are called “*Silent Witnesses.*” The exhibit has been displayed in many venues and is an effective means of illustrating the prevalence of violence against women.

As a member of the Middlesex County Coalition of Domestic Violence Teams, the Piscataway DVCIT helped to construct 22 life sized silhouettes representing victims from each of the 21 counties and one to commemorate all the other NJ women who have been killed as a result of domestic violence. The Coalition itself was formed to focus the attention of NJ public officials, citizens, and law enforcement on the extent of domestic violence in our state.

Through the organizational efforts of the DVCIT, the silhouettes have been displayed in the student centers of the Rutgers University campuses in New Brunswick and Piscataway. In addition, the DVCIT has provided a Silent Witness exhibit, including silhouettes, for the Westergard and Kennedy Libraries and for a display in Piscataway’s municipal building. Three of the silhouettes, which include one male, represent victims from Piscataway who were murdered during acts of domestic violence.

It is the male silhouette that draws the most attention. It is that of Police Officer Jerry Mahoney who was shot and killed in December 2007. His silhouette was designed and constructed by the Piscataway High School art and graphic arts departments.

One female silhouette is that of Karen Graf Muglia, sister to a Piscataway DVCIT member, who was bludgeoned to death by her 17 year old son, Vincent, in March 2008.

A second female silhouette is that of Lekita Council, a young woman of 34 who was murdered by her boyfriend in 1996.

These three Silent Witnesses, each one in recognition of a person who lived, worked, and contributed to our community, are honored in our annual exhibit. We remember them, and it is in their memory, that we go forward – touched, changed, and Silent No More.