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By [Melissa Regennitter of the Muscatine Journal](#)

MUSCATINE, Iowa — Not a day goes by that at least one woman who has been abused or assaulted doesn't stay at the domestic violence shelter in Muscatine.

"We are typically at 50 percent capacity, which is 10 women or children at the house on any given day," said Rachel Riley Smock, program supervisor for Muscatine's Sexual Assault/Domestic Abuse Advocacy Program.

Riley Smock has been with the program for 11 years. During that time she's seen the pain — both physical and emotional — of the abuse that thousands of women and children suffer from in Muscatine County. And during that time, she's also seen federal grants get cut, even though the demand for them stayed steady.

In 2007, the program served 1,098 clients. Those numbers can be categorized in the following ways:

- * 995 domestic violence victims.

- * 103 sexual assault victims.

Of the people served by the program, 52 women and 86 children stayed at the shelter. A total of 1,373 people utilized the program's 24-hour crisis line

Last year's funding totaled \$325,845, but it still wasn't enough, according to Riley Smock.

When she took over the position in 1997, funding was adequate to meet program needs. Since 2001, federal funding has dropped significantly to the point that three positions were cut: a bilingual advocate, child advocate and the volunteer coordinator. Each year funding drops by a small percentage. The grants make up more than 50 percent of the program budget.

Riley Smock said the funding cuts came after Sept. 11, 2001, when the Victims of Crime Act federal grant was required to compensate victims of the terrorist attacks on the United States. The Victims of Crime Act grant was a major contributor that supported Muscatine's Sexual Assault/Domestic Abuse Advocacy Program.

"It's understandable that the funding pool had to be dipped into because of the tragedies of

9/11, but that means the rest of us are picking up the pieces because these services are a still needed," Riley Smock said. Her staff had to take on the duties of the three positions that had been cut.

What is even more frustrating for Riley Smock, and potentially devastating to the program, is the potential for ongoing funding cuts. The federal funding through Victims of Crime Act funds could be cut by 22 percent, according to Marti Anderson, director of the Iowa Attorney General's Crime Victim Assistance Division. Though, she said, that number hasn't yet been confirmed at the national level. Also, the Violence Against Women Act is expected to be cut by about 5 percent.

Riley Smock said she was shocked last week to find out that of the 28 victim service projects in the state that are similar to Muscatine's program, the Sexual Assault/Domestic Abuse Advocacy Program ranks ninth for the number of victims served. The same statistics from the Department of Justice show that the program ranks 20th out of 28 for the amount of funding received.

"When I found out I said 'That isn't right,'" she said. "If we're ninth, our funding should be according. We are a 24-hour, 365-day-a-year operation and we are functioning with the bare minimum."

Though support from various corporations, churches, civic and social groups help keep the shelter afloat, more than \$100,000 per year would be needed to reinstate the positions that have been cut.

If more funding cuts take place this year, Riley Smock said she's not sure what will happen.

"There would have to be some horrible and difficult decisions made," She said. "We would have to choose between victims, leaving some with nowhere to go, and between programs and prevention work in the schools."

Top Jobs
Carrington Place CNAs
Grace Lutheran Church Youth Director
Hoffman, Inc. Crane Operator
Pierce Furniture Sales
U of I Family Care Wapello CMA/LPN/Receptionist Full Time
Construction Concrete Construction Laborers

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April is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Muscatine's Sexual Assault/Domestic Abuse Advocacy Program will be holding its annual fundraiser to support the Muscatine Domestic Violence Shelter. Half of the proceeds go toward operational costs of the shelter and half of the proceeds go to victims of domestic violence to help reestablish themselves in a home in the community. Last year's fundraiser brought in about \$34,000, down slightly from \$40,000 the previous year. The program is a service of Muscatine's Family Resources Inc.

The fundraiser

What: Sixth annual New Beginnings Fundraiser to support the Muscatine Domestic Violence Shelter

When: Doors open at 6:30 p.m., Saturday, April 12: Cocktails at 6:30 p.m.; dinner and raffle at 7:30 p.m. and auction at 9 p.m.

Where: Geneva Golf and Country Club, 3100 Bidwell Road, Muscatine

Cost: \$65 per person/\$450 per table of eight. Tickets must be purchased by Monday, April 7

For more information: call Family Resources Inc., 563-263-0067

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