

# Organization faces funding cuts

Published Thursday, October 9, 2008

Gov. Bob Riley awarded almost \$350,000 in grants in September to multiple organizations that provide services to victims of domestic violence.

Owen's House in Shelby County benefited from the grant package but director Helen Rardin fears it might not be enough.

"These are federal dollars that trickle down from the victims of crime act and we are thankful to receive them but the amount we received this year is a 17 percent cut from last year," Rardin said.

Owen's House received \$95,539 last year but only \$79,297 this year. Rardin said the grant money received each year funds three positions.

The center's services include crisis counseling, investigative interviews in a child-friendly environment, information on victims' compensation and support throughout the criminal justice process.

"We cannot continue to do what we are doing at the rate we are doing it without additional funds," Rardin said. "These children's lives have been interrupted and they deserve better."

Owen's House employs three counselors in addition to Rardin. Those counselors completed 180 new initial counseling sessions last year alone. Just between July 1 and Sept. 29 the organization worked 92 child abuse cases, 11 physical abuse cases and 26 cases referred by schools, juvenile court and other entities.

"I keep a knot in my stomach trying to decide what we can afford and what we can't," Rardin said. "If it weren't for the community and the grants we do receive we wouldn't make it. We simply couldn't do it without them."

Owen's House will receive United Way dollars for the first time this year, which will give the organization a boost.

Three other nonprofit agencies also received the federal grants including the Blount County Children's Center, the Bessemer Cut-off Advocacy Center and Victim Services of Cullman.

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