

Crisis center wins \$90,000 Byrne Grant

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NEWBURYPORT — The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center has been awarded a \$90,000 Byrne Grant for its efforts to fight domestic violence, state Rep. Michael Costello has announced.

The money will be used to support Jeanne Geiger's Greater Newburyport High-Risk Case Response Team. Now in its third year, the response team consists of members from victim services, law enforcement, probation, batterer intervention and Anna Jaques Hospital. The team works collaboratively to identify the most dangerous domestic violence cases in the community and provides individualized interventions to interrupt the cycle of escalating violence.

"The \$90,000 grant will ensure stability of the high-risk case response team," said director Suzanne Dubus. "With everyone feeling so shaky about the economy, the recession and nonprofit finances, it's nice to know that programs that save lives can be funded. We are deeply indebted to the Executive Office of Public Safety, but mostly to Rep. Costello."

Costello, the chairman of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, worked closely with Secretary of Public Safety Kevin Burke and the governor's office to secure the grant. Costello has long been a supporter of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center and, last year, the organization named him a Changemaker, for being a champion of battered women.

"Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center is a critical resource for combating domestic violence and helping battered women in the Newburyport community. The good work that the center does cannot be overstated," Costello said. "From a public safety perspective, the commonwealth needs to provide resources for these violence prevention services, especially when they've been proven to work. My office worked hard to ensure Jeanne Geiger was funded through the Byrne program."

"Funding is critical for law enforcement and domestic advocates to work together to prevent the escalation of domestic violence," Newburyport police Marshal Thomas Howard said. "I think the creation of the rapid response teams has allowed the community to take immediate action to safeguard victims from further harm. If we had not intervened in certain cases and taken steps to identify and protect victims, the result would have been much greater harm to the victim."

The Byrne grant marks another recognition of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center's efforts to end domestic violence. The center has received a Spirit of Advocacy Award from the National Network to End Domestic Violence, a Champion in Action Award from Citizen's Bank and a Good Citizen's Award from the Essex County Anti-Crime Council. Gov. Deval Patrick also praised the center's model last October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.