

# SAFV Voices

Sitkans Against Family Violence

September 2011

## Violence Prevention at Work Youth Kayak Trip in Glacier Bay

By Julia Smith, SAFV Prevention Coordinator

This past spring the Sitka Youth Leadership Committee helped organize a week-long leadership trip to Glacier Bay to bring youth together to help spread respect for self, others, and the environment.

In June, twenty teens, ages 14-20, from Juneau, Sitka, Gustavus, Hoonah, Dillingham, Kipnuk, Kotzebue, and one international exchange student from Russia, ex-

explored the vast wilderness of Alaska's backcountry and gained new leadership tools. During this week-long kayak adventure, teens acquired stronger outdoor survival skills by learning how to kayak, set up camp, cook, "leave no trace", and navigate through the icy

waters of the West Arm. They were also guided to develop stronger social skills and healthy relationships tools through our Isostatic Rebound curriculum which was designed and implemented by a few youth leaders and adult prevention staff. This curriculum provided opportunities for participants to both consider and practice important life skills like team building, effective communication, positive leadership, problem solving, personal responsibility, and respect for self, others, and the environment.

With us on this amazing expedition were four National Park Service rangers, two guides from

Southeast Alaska Guiding Association (SAGA), and two Violence Prevention staff from AWARE in Juneau and SAFV in Sitka. These adults were tasked with supporting these strong and powerful youth in both the emotional and physical challenges of venturing into the unknown and braving the elements of the natural world. We were also lucky to have a few special visitors in Bartlett Cove this year: statewide Director of Prevention from ANDVSA, Lori

Grassgreen; our statewide Prevention Project managers from the Center for Disease Control, Kirsten Rambo, Ph.D. and Jocelyn C. Wheaton, MPH; and Virginia Anderson, Ph.D., an eco-psychologist from California. Captain Brendon Maier of the M/V Baranoff Wind (Glacier Bay



Lodge day boat), dropped off our two teams deep into the West Arm where we began our 25-mile/ 5-day backcountry paddle. On this journey we viewed tide water glaciers, blue, brown, and black bears, waterfalls, sea otters, a sea lion haul out, whales, and worked through our Isostatic Rebound curriculum.

This expedition would not have been possible without the sponsorship and partnership of the following organizations and funding sources: Rural Community Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Pilot Program funding (DHSS) awarded to SAFV's

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## News from SAFV Staff

After a year that went by way too fast, SAFV had to say good-bye to our Jesuit Volunteers Liz Purdy and Jackie Twomey. They brought a lot of joy and professionalism to our clients and residents, and we are sad to see them leave Sitka. We wish them the very best for their future ventures.



Kat Elsener (left) and Anne Flaherty joined SAFV as Jesuit Volunteers.

We welcome our new JVs Anne Flaherty and Kathleen Elsener who joined us in August. Anne Flaherty comes to SAFV from Aurora, Illinois. She graduated from Loyola University Chicago with a degree in International Studies and minors in Spanish, Psychology and International Business. While in college, she spent a semester studying and working at a women's shelter in Chile. After graduation, she joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. In her free time, Anne enjoys painting, running, traveling and cooking. She is very excited about her JV placement in Sitka as a women's advocate.

As the middle of three girls in a Coast Guard family, Kat Elsener was born in Kodiak but raised all over the US, most recently in New York. She attended Georgetown University, where she received her B.S. in Human Science while playing trombone in pep band and planning city-wide scavenger hunts for new students. Last year Kat volunteered at Cristo Rey

Boston High School in Dorchester, wearing hats as both the AP Psychology teacher and the Lunch Lady. This year she will be working at SAFV as the Children's Advocate. Kat has been touched by the friendly welcome and generosity of the community towards the JVs, and she looks forward to getting to know some of the amazing people of Sitka over the course of the year.

SAFV also welcomes two new women's advocates, Stephanie Edenshaw and Deanna Moore. Stephanie also works as a dorm counselor at Mt. Edgecumbe High School and is a Sitka Tribe of Alaska council member; Deanna is a counselor at Bill Brady Healing Center. Both have experiences that compliment the work with and support of SAFV's clients, and they are a great addition to our team.



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prevention Coalition, *Pathways to a Safer Sitka*, to support innovative primary prevention programming; AWARE, Inc. in Juneau, ANDVSA youth mini-grant funding, Hoonah Indian Association, Glacier Bay National Park Service, Glacier Bay Lodge, SAGA, the Sitka Youth Leadership Committee (SYLC), and the proceeds from Sitka's 2011 Banff Film Festival.

Paddling for a week in one of the most beautiful and pristine places in the world, these teens gained new friendships and memories, experienced personal transformations and self-discoveries, and returned home with newfound inspiration and resources to promote health and wellness in their individual communities. We'd like to express our deepest gratitude to all who supported this life changing opportunity to youth across Alaska; we hope to be able to offer this once in a life time opportunity to future teen leaders next year. For more information call Julia at 747-3370.

## Violence Prevention at Work—Youth Programs in Sitka

### SYLC

The Sitka Youth Leadership Committee is dedicated to promoting respect and building bridges amongst youth in Sitka and across Alaska. Last year we

- led *Teen Talks* at Mt. Edgecumbe High School about respect for self, other, and our world;
- helped plan and went on an amazing kayak trip in Glacier Bay National Park with other youth from around Alaska to challenge social norms and connect deeper with ourselves and others;
- presented a workshop at both LeadOn!, the youth leadership conference in Anchorage, and at the Alaska Association of Student Government conference in Cordova on *How to Start Your Own Youth Leadership group*;
- wrote and recorded PSAs at Raven Radio;
- got selected to be in this year's Stand Up Speak Up poster campaign (check us out at [www.standupspeakupalaska.org](http://www.standupspeakupalaska.org)); and
- helped plan and promote the *Invisible Stories* project for the Sitka Choose Respect Mural. We even designed our own sweatshirts!

If you are a youth between 13 and 18 and are interested in joining this influential youth group, please contact Julia at 747-3370.



Vanessa Morales and Nelson Kanuk from Mt. Edgecumbe High School are active members of the Sitka Youth Leadership Committee.

### Running Program for Boys starts September 27

SAFV is preparing to launch one of the first pilot programs for Let Me Run, a prevention program for boys, outside of the state of North Carolina.

The 6 -week program uses the power of running and lively group activities to equip boys with tools to lead a more balanced and fulfilling life. Striving to strengthen boys' physical, emotional, and social well-being, this empowering program will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Keet Gooshi Heen starting on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

The program will culminate with the boys' participation in the Whalefest 5K run on November 12<sup>th</sup>. For more information, please contact Nick Campolettano at 747-3370.



## Violence Prevention at Work—Sitka’s Choose Respect Mural



Invisible Stories revealing hidden violence and calling for respect and healing were developed, interpreted, and applied to a 12 by 24 foot mural. The process has been ongoing during the last year and culminated with the visit of two mural artists, Sonessa Lundmark and Eliseo Art Silva, in August.

With the help of 178 volunteers, they transferred a watercolor image on 4 by 4 foot fabric squares that were later glued to aluminum panels. The mural will be installed above the main entrance to Blatchley Middle School. The official unveiling will take place in October to acknowledge Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Please look for details in the local media.

Besides hidden stories made visible, the mural shows prominent Sitka landmarks, the natural world, traditional and contemporary ways of live, prominent Southeast Alaskan individuals, spells the words “Choose” and “Respect”, and displays symbols of respect from various cultures. This project was made possible with staff support by SAFV, Artchange, Inc., and many volunteers, and grant funding from RurAL CAP, Sitka White Elephant, the 2010 Sitka Health Summit, Sitka Charitable Trust, the State of Alaska Health and Social Services Department of Behavioral Health (subcontract of the *Pathways to a Safer Sitka* award), and individual donors.



## International Commission Finds United States Denied Justice to Domestic Violence Survivor

### Landmark Human Rights Case Finds that Failure to Enforce a Restraining Order and Indifference to Domestic Violence Led to Daughters' Deaths

WASHINGTON, D.C.

In a landmark decision, an international tribunal has found the U.S. government responsible for human rights violations against a Colorado woman and her three deceased children who were victims of domestic violence.

Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. United States is the first case brought by a domestic violence survivor against the U.S. before an international human rights body, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The IACHR ruling also sets forth comprehensive recommendations for changes to U.S. law and policy pertaining to domestic violence.

The case concerns a tragic 1999 incident in which police in Castle Rock, Colorado failed to respond to Jessica Lenahan's repeated calls for help after her estranged husband, Simon Gonzales, kidnapped their three young children in violation of a domestic violence restraining order. Ten hours after Lenahan's first call to the police, her husband drove up to the Castle Rock Police Department and began firing his gun at the police station. The police returned fire, killing Gonzales. Inside the truck, the police found the bodies of the three girls – Rebecca, Katheryn, and Leslie – who had been shot dead. Local authorities failed to conduct a proper investigation into the children's deaths, resulting in questions

about the cause, time, and place of their deaths that remain to this day.

"I have waited 12 years for justice, knowing in my heart that police inaction led to the tragic and untimely deaths of my three young daughters," said Lenahan. "Today's decision tells the world that the government violated my human rights by failing to protect me and my children from domestic violence."

Lenahan is represented by the Human Rights Clinic at the University of Miami School of Law, the Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic and the American Civil Liberties Union.

"The commission's determination that the United States violated Ms. Lenahan's and her children's human rights by failing to ensure their protection from domestic violence has far-reaching implications," said Professor Caroline Bettinger-Lopez, director of the Human Rights Clinic at the University of Miami School of Law. "As our country seeks to promote human rights of women and children around the world, we must also look at our own record here at home."

The commission's decision stands in stark contrast to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Town of Castle Rock v. Jessica Gonzales* (2005), where the justices ruled that Lenahan (then Gonzales) had no constitutional right to police protection, and that the failure of the police to enforce Lenahan's order of protection was not unconstitutional. Lenahan then filed a petition against the U.S. before the IACHR, alleging violations of international human rights.

Source: [www.andvsa.org](http://www.andvsa.org)



### Teens "Talk Back" with New Avatar July 27, 2011

Pressuring someone for nude pics...cool or not cool? Teens can now create personalized talking avatar videos to answer that important question.

*That's Not Cool*, a Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund) public education initiative, has launched a new speaking avatar tool that allows teens to "[Have Your Say](#)" when it comes to

relationship abuse. After watching an animated video addressing digital dating abuse on the homepage, users create a personalized character and voice to respond to the question posed in the video: "Pressuring Someone for Nude Pics, Cool or Not Cool?" *That's Not Cool* uses text-to-speech technology that enables the teen-created character to speak the answer to the question in a voice style s/he selects. Each unique video entry can be posted and shared on [www.thatsnotcool.com](http://www.thatsnotcool.com). More information at [www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)

## New Study Reveals Why Some Domestic Violence Victims Recant

A new study uses – for the first time - recorded jailhouse telephone conversations between men charged with felony domestic violence and their victims to help reveal why some victims decide not to follow through on the charges.

Researchers listened to telephone conversations between 17 accused male abusers in a Washington state detention facility and their female victims, all of whom decided to withdraw their accusations of abuse. For each of the couples, the researchers analyzed up to about three hours of phone conversations.

The analysis of these conversations may fundamentally change how victim advocates and prosecutors work with domestic violence victims to prosecute abusers, according to the researchers.

“The existing belief is that victims recant because the perpetrator threatens her with more violence. But our results suggest something very different,” said Amy Bonomi, lead author of the study and associate professor of human development and family science at Ohio State University. “Perpetrators are not threatening the victim, but are using more sophisticated emotional appeals designed to minimize their actions and gain the sympathy of the victim. That should change how we work with victims.”

The detention facility in the study routinely records conversations of detainees to increase jail safety. The couples were aware they were being recorded through an automated message at the beginning of each call. Such recordings have been approved by the state Supreme Court, and the researchers gained approval from the county prosecutor’s office to use the recordings. All the recordings involved cases that had already been resolved.

The researchers chose to study victims who had decided to recant. They listened to from 30 to 192 minutes of recorded conversations for each couple. After analyzing the calls, the researchers identified a five-step process that went from the victims vigorously defending themselves in the phone calls to agreeing to a plan to recant their testimony against the accused abuser.

Typically, in the first and second conversa-

tions there is a heated argument between the couple, revolving around the event leading to the abuse charge. In these early conversations, the victim is strong, and resists the accused perpetrator’s account of what happens. “The victim starts out with a sense of determination and is eager to advocate for herself, but gradually that erodes as the phone calls continue,” said Bonomi, who is also an affiliate with the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle.

In the second stage, the perpetrator minimizes the abuse and tries to convince the victim that what happened wasn’t that serious. In one couple, where the victim suffered strangulation and a severe bite to the face, the accused perpetrator repeatedly reminded the victim that he was being charged with “felony assault,” while asking whether she thought he deserved the felony charge. “Finally, he wore her down and she agreed with him that he didn’t deserve a felony charge,” Bonomi said.

What happens next in this second stage, though, is the critical step in the process of recantation.

“The tipping point for most victims occurs when the perpetrator appeals to her sympathy, by describing how much he is suffering in jail, how depressed he is, and how much he misses her and their children,” Bonomi said. “The perpetrator casts himself as the victim, and quite often the real victim responds by trying to soothe and comfort the abuser.” In one case, the accused perpetrator threatened suicide and said in a phone call to his victim, “Nobody loves me though, right?”

At that point, the victim’s tone changed dramatically, and she sounded concerned that he might actually try to hurt himself, Bonomi said. From then on, the victim promised to help him get out of jail.

In the third stage, after the accused abuser has gained the sympathy of the victim, the couple bonds over their love for each other and positions themselves against others who “don’t understand them.”

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## A Disturbing Message

August 23, 2011

“This is a disturbing end to a case that has raised serious questions about how our legal system treats victims of violence,” said Esta Soler, president and founder of Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund), in response to prosecutors dropping charges against Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The former managing director of the International Monetary Fund had been charged with sexually assaulting Nafissatou Diallo at the hotel where she worked as a housekeeper. “This action sends a dangerous message to victims of rape and sexual assault.”

“By all accounts,” Soler continued, “there is considerable evidence that Ms. Diallo was forced into non-consensual sexual relations with Mr. Strauss-Kahn. The decision not to prosecute turned on her credibility as a witness, cast into doubt not by her accounts of the alleged assault itself but rather by her statements and actions about other matters. That creates a high bar for prosecutable cases and sends a dangerous message about our legal system’s willingness to seek justice for victims of rape and sexual assault who have made mistakes or been im-



perfect.”

“There is no question that this case would have posed challenges in court and that a conviction was not assured,” Soler said. “But like all of us, rape victims are imperfect, and juries are capable of understanding that. The prosecution’s decision denies a jury the chance to consider the

evidence and Ms. Diallo the chance to face the man she says assaulted her.”

“Prosecutors erred by jumping to conclusions early in this case and by leaking to the media information that raised doubts about Ms. Diallo’s credibility. It is unfair to all parties to try cases in the media, as prosecutors did here,” she added. “Educating the courts to handle cases of rape and sexual assault appropriately has been a long process, and clearly our work is not yet done. For now, we must redouble our efforts to prevent sexual violence of all kinds by teaching the next generation that violence is always wrong, and we must ensure that our legal system vigorously pursues justice for all victims of violence.”

Source: [www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)

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The fourth stage involves the perpetrator asking the victim to recant her accusations against him and the victim complying. Finally, in the fifth stage, the couple constructs the recantation plan and develops their stories. “They often exchange very specific instructions about what should be done and said in court. They seal their bond as a couple and see themselves as fighting together against the state, which they view as trying to keep them apart,” Bonomi said.

While the couples were told that the phone calls were being recorded, Bonomi said she doesn’t believe it had a major effect on what they talked about. “These are couples in crisis and the perpetrator wants above all to get his freedom. He isn’t holding back,” she said.

Bonomi said she also doesn’t believe the fact that the calls were recorded is what kept the accused perpetrators from threatening violence. Instead, she thinks the men calculated they had a better chance of succeeding if they didn’t make direct threats. If the accused abuser threatens his girlfriend or wife, she may hang up the phone or refuse to talk to him. Of course, the threat of future violence is always there for these

couples, Bonomi said, but the perpetrators didn’t use threats in these calls to achieve their aims.

Bonomi said the results of this study could help prosecutors and other victim advocates as they work with abuse victims in the criminal justice system. “These results provide a new model for how to work with victims. Advocates can counsel victims up front and let them know the sympathy appeals and minimization techniques that their husband or boyfriend is likely to use on them. “If the victims are prepared, they may be less likely to fall for these techniques and would be more likely to follow through with the prosecution.”

The results of this study also show how emotion-based techniques of abusers may make it difficult for some victims to disentangle themselves from violent relationships, Bonomi said. The study appears online in the journal *Social Science & Medicine* and will appear in a future print edition.

Source: *Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence*, [www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org), CAEPV e-update (August 19, 2011)

### Transportation Help Needed!

If you own a car and are willing to occasionally drive SAFV residents to appointments, please call Martina at 747-3370.



If you don't own a car but would like to help, please donate bus passes. They are available at the Ride office, Sitka Tribal Enterprises, 204 Katlian Street, 747-7103.



### Please Participate in Our Community Survey!

Enclosed in this newsletter is SAFV's two-page community survey. We are required by our state funders to run this survey every year. Please, if you have the time, fill it out and mail it back to us at

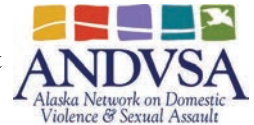
P.O. Box 6136, Sitka, AK 99835.

Surveys from Angoon and Kake are especially valuable to us.

**We appreciate your support.**



United Way Member Agency  
Member of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault



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