

Director: Agencies need to collaborate to help end family violence

By Ralph Schaefer TB&LN Correspondent

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Work continues to develop programs that will help end family violence in Tulsa.

Deborah Shallcross, who served as chair of the Family Safety Center for two years and now is a board member, said a group is working to develop a plan to interact with families impacted with domestic violence or child abuse issues.

Shallcross, of counsel at GableGotwals and a retired Tulsa district judge, praised the Family Safety Center and Child Abuse Network, also known as the Child Abuse **Component, for efforts in dealing with difficult situations that disrupt people's lives.**

But the need extends beyond children and includes the elderly, she said.

“One of my dreams for many years has been to have not just a collaboration of agencies who provide resources to victims and families impacted by domestic violence, but I always wanted to add elder abuse,” Shallcross said. “We don’t have room for them at the Family Safety Center. We also need to add the Department of Human Services because they play such a big role in these families’ lives.”

A group is working to enlarge collaboration of organizations that work with families with violence issues, she said. Families served at the Family Safety Center are often the same ones going to the Child Advocacy Center.

The coalition collaboration in place at the Family Safety Center includes the Tulsa Police Department with Chief Chuck Jordan serving as chair. Other members include **Tulsa County, DVIS, Tulsa County District Attorney, Tulsa County Sheriff’s Office, Tulsa District Court, Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry, RSVP, and YWCA Tulsa.**

Former Mayor Dewey F. Bartlett Jr. was a strong Family Safety Center supporter, and Shallcross is confident that Mayor G.T. Bynum will come on board when needed.

The coalition focusing on child abuse and family issues is organized and looking at services that can be harnessed, Shallcross said. The most important part is to eliminate duplication and save money.

It no longer is possible to depend on state or federal government funding. Organizations in the county, state and across the country will lose millions of dollars focused on stopping violence. Adequate space to house different groups that provide services is an issue, and Shallcross thinks that something will have to be built.

“This isn’t a touchy-feely thing,” she said. “This is a public safety issue. We will need approximately 100,000 square feet. We won’t put everyone in the building, and this is not a pie-in-the-sky concept.”

What will happen is that organizations will have adequate space so staff members located in outside offices are brought under one roof. Employees will be trained in all areas — child abuse, domestic violence and other family-related problems.

The City of Tulsa provided space for the Family Safety Center in the police courts building, a space that quickly was outgrown as the number of people seeking protective orders and other assistance continued to increase. The Parent Child Center provided a child development expert who meets with children and their parents to resolve issues.

The program provides follow-up assistance as needed. It no longer is possible to give someone a card and tell them they need counseling at DVIS or to establish a new residence when the family is dependent on a breadwinner who just walked out or is abusive.

“It is my hope that we can develop a program that will work to provide families with services they really need,” Shallcross said.

http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/tulsabusiness/director-agencies-need-to-collaborate-to-help-end-family-violence/article_7c4e0638-9da5-5c46-b91e-d100d32abf87.html