

Abuse Leaves an Empty Place at the Table

Domestic violence is a deadly crime that creates a painful void – a permanent empty place at the table – for families whose loved ones were killed at the hands of abusers. A unique exhibit captures this reality and offers a reminder of the lethality of domestic violence.

Homicides Create 'An Empty Place'

Organized by local domestic violence programs in collaboration with the families and friends of victims, *An Empty Place at the Table* exhibit:

- recognizes the individuality of each victim
- establishes a way to mourn the loss of their lives
- raises awareness about domestic violence and the impact of this crime on our communities

This exhibit comprises victims' place settings as well as newspaper clippings about the homicides, photographs and personal items, such as a child's favorite toy or a woman's scarf.

When and How it Began

Following a cluster of domestic violence murders in Lackawanna County, PA, in 1993, the community responded by holding a rally and march outside the courthouse. To keep the momentum for social change alive, rally organizers and the Women's Resource Center, Inc., Scranton, PA, worked together to create *An Empty Place at the Table*.

This exhibit demonstrates the devastating result of violence against women and children and helps ensure that these deaths are not forgotten.

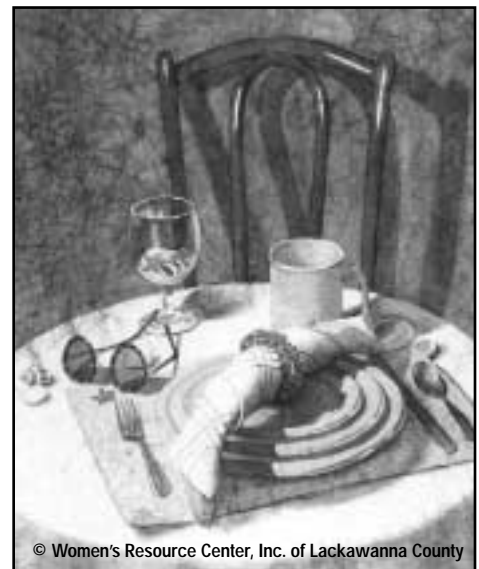
Adding Place Settings

The National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project has promoted the exhibit and, as a result, similar displays are now being established throughout the nation. The exhibits, often displayed during *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month* in October, offer an opportunity to memorialize women and children who have been killed by batterers.

Memorial Artwork

The artwork, *An Empty Place at the Table*, is a watercolor painted and donated by artist Julia Valenza in memory of Mary Ellen Andrews who was murdered by her husband. Mary Ellen was a 39-year-old Pennsylvania woman who sought refuge at the Women's Resource Center shelter before fleeing from her abusive husband to Florida. Her husband tracked her down and killed her in 1989.

The painting (pictured here in black and white) was commissioned by the Women's Resource Center and is frequently used in conjunction with *An Empty Place at the Table* memorial displays.



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