

MEDIA ADVISORY and PHOTO OP
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Silent Witnesses Speak of Domestic Abuse

There are times when silence is appropriate, and there are times when silence kills. In Canada, family violence costs many lives every year, often because the shame we attach to domestic abuse keeps it behind closed doors until it escalates to the point of no return.

In 1990, a group of women and/or artists in the state of Minnesota decided it was time to do something to stop the cycle. From the idea of silence they created an exhibit that spoke volumes. Life-size silhouettes began to appear in public places, each of them representing someone, usually a woman, who had died at the hands of a spouse, ex-spouse, partner or other family member. The movement grew; Silent Witness exhibits, the first step in an initiative dedicated to stopping domestic abuse causing death, spread across the United States and began to appear in Canada as well.

At the request of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS), a seniors' woodworking club in north Edmonton has taken on the job of producing Alberta's own Silent Witnesses. These meticulous craftspeople will be at work from **10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Friday, August 20, at the Northgate Lions Senior Citizens Recreation Centre, 7524 – 139 Avenue.**

Richard Daley, a former director of IGA stores for Western Canada, is president of the recreation centre's Woodworking Club. "Without him," says Judy Pozniak, the centre's program coordinator "it wouldn't have happened." Woodwork was something Daley took up after he retired 12 years ago. Though the middle of summer and vacation time, he was able to enlist a group of ten people for the ACWS project. The hearts and hands were certainly willing, but the project proved to be less straightforward than it seemed, and he ended up calling the designer to clarify the instructions. Since then, the group has devoted itself to sawing, sanding, assembling and painting the figures.

The full exhibit will be on display in November, as part of Family Violence Prevention Month. This is your opportunity to see the seniors at work and to get a sneak preview of an exhibit that aims to reduce domestic violence and, in particular, family violence that causes death.

Since most of the figures are intended to commemorate actual victims, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters asks those who have lost loved ones due to family violence to please contact the organization, at (780) 456-7000, 9321 Jasper Avenue.

For information regarding the viewing, please contact Jan Reimer, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (780) 456-7000 or Judy Pozniak, Northgate Lions Senior Citizen Recreation Centre, (780) 496-7355.