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## She's made an impact Safe Shelter worker wins state award

By *Melanie M. Sidwell*  
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LONGMONT — Shelley Mann, a Firestone resident and employee of Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley, has been awarded a state honor in the crusade against domestic violence.

Mann has been a children's advocate at Safe Shelter for the past six years.

On Tuesday, she received the Community Impact Award from Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence during a rally on the west steps of the state Capitol in Denver highlighting October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

In 2006, members of the coalition's Survivors Task Force, who are survivors of domestic abuse, created the award to honor people and groups in the movement to end domestic violence.

This year, the task force received nine nominations.

Jaimie Vela-Davis, a Safe Shelter children's advocate, said she nominated Mann because she is so humble about the huge difference she makes in the lives of children of domestic violence.

"It was so difficult to put onto paper what she does. ... The enjoyment in her job is what she sees in the eyes of the children," Vela-Davis said.

She added that the award highlights the broad approach to domestic abuse issues involving children.

"We work with the whole child" through tutoring, mentoring and activity clubs through Safe Shelter started by Mann, she said, "so we can bring back that child to a healthier place."

Mann has worked in shelters for battered women and children for the past 17 years. She worked at a shelter during college and continued working for the cause as a children's counselor in Kansas.

She now works at Safe Shelter as a children's advocate in the outreach office. She started daily sessions with children that include games and crafts and created a book club and math club for girls.

"A big part of our program is giving the child a chance to talk," Mann said last week. "It's giving them their own voice that was lost before."

She said domestic violence between adults disrupts the lives of children, affecting their health, sleep, social interactions and academics.

Physically, children can face ulcers, migraines, stomach-aches and worsened asthma symptoms, she said. Mann added that children also become "hypervigilant and worried," which can cause insomnia and nightmares and lead to problems at school and with their peers.

"They never get a chance to recharge," she said. "One little girl told me once, 'I'm always half-awake.' I'll always remember that. Domestic violence is not just between Mom and Dad. The child is affected, too."

From 2000 to 2006, 19 children in Colorado were killed during domestic violence-related incidents, according to the state Domestic Abuse Assistance Program. Last year, Colorado domestic violence programs sheltered 5,601 women and children.

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Shelley Mann, left, a children's advocate with Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley, does arts and crafts with Angelynn, 14, at the shelter on Thursday. Mann, who has been working at the shelter for six years, received the Community Impact Award from Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence. **Times-Call/Jackie Endsley**