

**FRONT PAGE**

**Woman On Trial In Ex-Boyfriend's Murder**

**Page 2**

**Woman On Trial In Ex-Boyfriend's Murder , cont.**

**Page 3**

**Supreme Court to hear case that would expand Domestic Violence laws to unwed, same-sex couples**

**Page 4**

**Domestic Violence During Pregnancy Doubles Risk Of Premature Birth**

**Page 5**

**Domestic Violence During Pregnancy cont.**

**Page 6**

**Dentist Helps Domestic Violence Survivors Smile Again**

**BACK PAGE**

**HAPPENINGS**

**STAFF**

**Erik Lyon**  
BHS  
Director

**BRITTANY**  
FOCIS  
Program  
Coordinator

**Mark**  
Kroll  
Editor  
& Newsletter  
Design

# FOCIS NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2016

### Woman On Trial In Ex-Boyfriend's Murder Testifies He Was 'Controlling, Abusive'

Cherelle Baldwin faces up to 60 years for killing Jeffrey Brown, which she says was self-defense.  
By Melissa Jeltsen, Senior Reporter, The Huffington Post [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Cherelle Baldwin held back tears Tuesday as she told a jury how her ex-boyfriend Jeffrey Brown whipped her with his belt and then wrapped it around her neck as her 19-month-old son cried nearby.

Brown sent a rash of threatening texts just before the early-morning attack in her bedroom, testified Baldwin. He repeated one twice in a row: "do a on sight." She interpreted that to mean "dead on arrival."

Baldwin is on trial in Bridgeport, Connecticut, charged with murdering Brown on May 18, 2013, by striking him with her car and pinning him against a cement wall. Firefighters found a man's black leather belt under his body.

Baldwin maintains she acted in self-defense after Brown broke into her house and strangled her. She says she didn't intend to kill him.

Police didn't buy her story, saying physical evidence, including a lack of visible injuries on her neck, is inconsistent with what she told investigators.

She faces up to 60 years behind bars if convicted. This is her second trial; the first resulted in a mistrial.

"Everything happened so quick," Baldwin testified on Tuesday. "All I could think about was the baby."

She said that after Brown strangled her, she ran from the house, shoeless and without her glasses, dressed only in a nightgown, leaving her baby crying in the bedroom. She said she got into her car.

## Woman On Trial In Ex-Boyfriend's Murder , cont.

Brown followed her and tried to strangle her in the car, she said. He was coming around on the passenger side, she said, when she stepped on the gas.

At some point, she said, Brown was on the hood of her car. The next thing she remembers is being on the ground, outside her vehicle, with a broken leg. "I didn't mean to kill Jeffrey," she said.

Much of Baldwin's testimony centered on the couple's history of domestic violence.

Baldwin characterized her ex-boyfriend as "controlling, abusive," and told the jury that he had previously slashed her tires, broken a window in her house, pulled her by her hair, choked her, stolen her cellphone, and stalked her at her mother's home and her workplace. Police responded to two incidents.

At one point in her testimony, Baldwin's heavy sobbing, amplified by a microphone, forced the court to recess.

Karen Jubanyik, an emergency medicine physician at Yale-New Haven Hospital and an expert in non-fatal strangulation, testified it was common for strangulation victims to have no visible injuries after an attack. "I have seen plenty of people who have reported being strangled with no marks at all," she said.

Jubanyik noted that strangulation is a common method of abuse in domestic violence relationships, likely because it can go undetected. "It's very threatening, and it's very terrifying," she said.

The defense also presented a photo of Baldwin taken in the hospital after the attack. It shows Baldwin's naked back, with what appears to be lacerations down her right side.

Jubanyik testified that the injuries were consistent with marks left by a belt. "They are linear lacerations, with a curve to them," she said. "That is what I have seen with patients who have been assaulted with a belt."

Cindy Long, Baldwin's mother, said she believes her daughter told the truth on the stand. "She was just defending herself and saving her baby," Long said.

Baldwin's father, Bernard Baldwin Sr., said he was saddened by his daughter's testimony. "I didn't know she was going through so much," he said. "I wish I did know, because it wouldn't have happened like that."

# Supreme Court to hear case that would expand Domestic Violence laws to unwed, same-sex couples

By, Maya T. Prabhu [www.postandcourier.com](http://www.postandcourier.com)

The South Carolina Supreme Court on Wednesday will hear an argument to expand the state's domestic violence laws to same-sex couples.

Attorneys Bakari Sellers and Alexandra Benevento in August requested the hearing after a woman, who is remaining anonymous, was denied a protection order by a Richland County court after being hit and choked by her ex-fiancee, who is also a woman. The lawyers say the state's law violates the Fourteenth Amendment because it does not protect same-sex, unmarried couples.

"We're asking the court to ensure that same-sex couples receive the same protections that heterosexual couples receive," Sellers said.

The state's domestic violence law, as written, does not apply to a man or woman who is battered by a partner of the same sex if they aren't married. Victims are defined in the law as a "household member" who is a spouse, a former spouse, persons who have a child in common or a male and female who are cohabiting or formerly cohabited.

Sellers said he doesn't want the court to throw out the domestic violence reforms passed last year, which increases penalties for both first-time abusers and frequent offenders, as well as a partial gun ban for those convicted of abuse.

"We're arguing that it's proper for the law to remain intact and ensure that the constitutional protection is also granted to same-sex couples," Sellers said.

S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson will defend the state's domestic violence law during Wednesday's hearing. Representatives in his office declined to comment, citing the pending case.

Sara Barber, executive director for the S.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, said she hopes the court rules in favor of the unidentified plaintiff. "Our stance is that the law should provide equal protection for all," she said.

Barber said national surveys show that domestic violence occurs at least as frequently in same-sex relationships as it does in heterosexual ones. However, the way state law is structured, South Carolina does not track those incidents.

"Police just file it as an assault case," Barber said. "If this domestic violence law is extended to same-sex couples, it will help us to protect those victims and survivors because we would know the level of the abuse that's happening in the state."

South Carolina has long ranked first or near the top as the deadliest state for women at the hands of men. The Legislature largely ignored the issue until the death toll was documented last year in The Post and Courier's Pulitzer Prize-winning series "Till Death Do Us Part." The incidence and statistics involving victims of same-sex relationships were not included in the series because they're not covered under the law.

# **Domestic Violence During Pregnancy Doubles Risk Of Premature Birth**

A new study highlights just how important it is for OBGYNs to screen pregnant women for abuse.

Melissa Jeltsen Senior Editor, The Huffington Post

**Women who experience domestic violence while pregnant are twice as likely to give birth to a premature baby or a baby with low birth weight, according to a new study.**

**Researchers from the University of Iowa performed a meta-analysis on 50 studies that looked at the effects of domestic violence on pregnancy, evaluating data from over 5 million women in 17 countries.**

**Their report, published in BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, offers the latest evidence that domestic violence during pregnancy is associated with adverse birth outcomes.**

**"Domestic violence by a partner or ex-partner is of particular concern during pregnancy when not one, but two lives are at risk," Audrey Saftlas, the study's lead author and a professor of epidemiology at the University of Iowa, said in a press release.**

**"Although rates of domestic violence differ across the world, the detrimental effects of abuse on pregnant women are very clear and we must continue to establish effective interventions globally in order to prevent violence and to support women who report abuse."**

## **Domestic Violence During Pregnancy Doubles Risk Of Premature Birth, cont.**

**The CDC estimates that one in four women in the U.S. will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.**

**Around three women a day are killed by intimate partners. Saftlas told The Huffington Post that domestic violence can affect a growing fetus in a number of ways.**

**Most obviously, if women are physically assaulted during pregnancy, they're more likely to encounter problems with their pregnancy. But, she said, it is the indirect effects of domestic violence that are especially worrisome.**

**"Women who experience violence during pregnancy are stressed," she said. "We know that stress is associated with increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes."**

**Women who are in abusive relationships are also more likely to have less prenatal care and inadequate nutritional intake, she said, and some may turn to coping behaviors such as drinking or smoking cigarettes.**

**Saftlas said she hopes that these findings will encourage OBGYNS and general practitioners to do more to screen pregnant women for signs of abuse, so they can get access to resources.**

**"Pregnancy is a very wonderful but vulnerable time for both mother and child," she said. "My hope is that there will be more research to evaluate the efficacy of these interventions for reducing violence in the lives of these women, and ideally interventions to prevent the violence from occurring in the first place."**

# Dentist Helps Domestic Violence Survivors Smile Again With Free Services

Elyse Wanshel , Trends Writer, The Huffington Post, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)

**Women who escape abusive situations have very little to smile about. But one dentist is trying to change that.**

**Dr. Tina Meisami, a Toronto-based dentist founded Project Restoring Smiles, a network of dentists that provide free dental treatment to survivors of domestic violence.**

**“As a woman, I felt as though I needed to stand up for their rights,” Meisami told her alumni newspaper, University of Toronto News. “As a human being, I felt their pain. As a surgeon, I wanted to fix their oral and facial pain.”**

**CTV News reports that Meisami started the program in 2011 on International Women’s Day. Five years ago, there were only five dentists involved. Today Meisami has grown her network to 18 dentists (including herself) who have treated 45 patients and provided more than \$200,000 worth of free dental work.**

**“We wanted to do something within our own skills to help other women get out of the vicious cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty and their ramifications, such as poor oral and overall health,” Meisami told City News of her network, which includes dentists in other Canadian cities like Ottawa and St. Catherine’s.**

**The hard work has paid off. One of Meisami’s patients, a woman, who told CTV she wanted to be referred to as Sam, was living in a shelter four years ago. She had escaped an abusive situation and was embarrassed by the state of her teeth, she was even afraid to open her mouth. She broke down in tears when her caseworker introduced her to a dentist at Project Restoring Smiles, who fixed her up and allowed her to have a voice again.**

**Of the experience, Sam told CTV: “[Meisami] has changed my life, saved my life, and I’m forever grateful for this.”**

# HAPPENINGS

## ANGER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Wednesdays, 6-7:30pm. Co-ed six week group, start date contingent upon sign-ups. must be a FRTH registered patient. Full attendance required for a certificate. \$40 fee for non-native clients. (No couples & NOT for Court Mandates). Contact Tom @ 532-6811, ex 270

## POSITIVE PARENTING & POSITIVE PARENTING OF TEENS

is done on an individual basis as space and time allow. \$30 fee for non-native clients. For info or sign up, Contact Mark @ 532-6811 ex 249.

## FOCIS DOMESTICE VIOLENCE WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

Women's Support Group Tuesdays 3 p.m. to 5p.m. Self-validation & processing of abusive relationships. Intake assessments must be done before entry into the group. For info, contact Brittany@ FOCIS PROGRAM, 532-6811 ex 270.

## [NEW GROUP]

## BRAVE AT HEART CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

For anyone who has been touched by Cancer Meetings every 3rd Wednesday starting Feb 17th 2016 6:30 to 7:30 pm Call Ashley, 532-6811 ex.272

## GUYS TAKE CHARGE GROUP

Thursday afternoons, 3:30 to 4:30 Guys from 10 to 13 are invited For info or sign-up call Ashley, 532-6811 ex 272

## THURSDAY CRAFT GROUP

Explore both Modern & Traditional forms of beadwork. Thursday afternoons from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the South Conference room, call Mark @ 532-6811 ex 249. for info or sign up.

## RED ROAD TO WELLBRIETY MEETING

For those that have suffered alcoholism and drug addiction and other forms of

self-defeating behaviors, you can walk the 12 steps of the Red Road to recovery.

WEEKLY MEETINGS ON WEDNESDAY @ 6.00 PM

@ FEATHER RIVER TRIBAL HEALTH

530-534-5394

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

## LOCAL DV SERVICES

### FOCIS PROGRAM SERVICES

Advocacy Services, Restraining Order assistance, court accompaniment, Community education and in-service training, Crisis intervention services, Women's Talking Circles, Resource information & referral service. Feather River Tribal Health 530-534-5394 ext. 270

### Catalyst DV Services

24-hour hotline for DV intervention & referrals, Emergency Shelter, Children's Program at HAVEN, Transitional Housing & Household establishment Drop-in centers, Individual counseling, Support groups, Restraining Order assistance & Court Accompaniment, Community Outreach. 24-Hour Hotline 800-895-8476 Oroville Drop-in Center 530-532-6427

### SHARP (Self Help and Referral Program)

Self Help center that provides general assistance to people who do not have attorneys. Assistance is provided in the areas of family law, guardianships, evictions, small claims, name changes, and restraining orders. 1675 Montgomery Street Oroville, 530-532-7015



This project was supported by the Grant no.2013-WF-AX-0025 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), U.S. Department of Justice, and through Grant Award Number DS13041660 from the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA). The points of view, opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibit are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or of Cal EMA. Cal EMA reserves a royal-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, and the use materials and to authorize others to do so.