



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019

CONTACT: KARA MCCARTHY, 202-307-1241
kara.mccarthy@USDOJ.GOV

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATE WITH SPECIAL COURAGE AWARD

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today presented Shari Kastein, a Sioux Center, Iowa, woman, with the Special Courage Award during the annual National Crime Victims’ Service Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. This honor is awarded to victims or survivors who exhibit exceptional perseverance and determination in dealing with their own victimization, or who acted bravely to prevent victimization.

“After Ms. Kastein suffered the horror of domestic violence, she was able to salvage hope from that painful experience and has used it to assist thousands of survivors,” said Attorney General William P. Barr. “We honor her today for her extraordinary courage, her exceptional resilience and the more than three decades of compassionate service she has provided to domestic violence victims across Iowa and South Dakota.”

In 1984, Kastein left an abusive relationship, but soon after, her 15-month-old daughter was sexually assaulted and beaten by a family “friend.” They ended up at a battered women’s shelter and found the safety net they desperately needed, and Kastein became inspired to help others in similar situations. She was instrumental in the creation of the Family Crisis Center in Redfield, South Dakota, which earned her an appointment by then-Governor George S. Mickelson to South Dakota’s first Victim Compensation Board of Directors. Later, she created a four-county domestic violence and sexual assault program in Northwest Iowa and a statewide domestic violence helpline. She also created the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, Western Iowa Survivors of Homicide Unit, which provides care and services to the family and friends of murder victims and those seriously injured by crime.

“The safety of our communities and the integrity of our justice system depend on our treatment of those who have been most directly affected by crime and violence,” said Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth. “Through her own powerful example, Ms. Kastein has inspired us to work harder to meet the needs and respect the rights of all crime victims.”

The Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a component of OJP, leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and hosts an annual award ceremony. President Reagan proclaimed the first Victims’ Rights Week in 1981, calling for greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of victims. This year’s observance takes place April 7-

13, with the theme “Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future.”

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth, provides federal leadership, grants and resources to improve the nation’s capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal justice system. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

###