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## Celebrating the Legacy

The Lethality Assessment Program—Maryland Model (LAP) began as a problem to solve. By 2003, the LAP's founder, Dave Sargent, had been serving as a consultant to the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence for 7 years—developing a Model Domestic Violence Policy for Maryland law enforcement; writing a domestic violence curriculum for police recruits; conducting law enforcement in-service and entry-level training, and creating specialized trainings and protocols on strangulation, stalking, and cyber-stalking.

Throughout those 7 years, Dave's instruction on domestic violence response touched more than 7,000 police recruits and officers in the state. The focus of these trainings, conferences, and materials was, necessarily, on *response*: in the moment of crisis, in the aftermath of an abusive incident, how should Maryland police officers respond to ensure a thorough investigation and, ultimately, secure a prosecutable offense.

Dave, however, was not satisfied to standardize a *response* to domestic violence. Between June 2002 and July 2003, Maryland experienced 89 domestic violence-related deaths—the second-highest number since MNADV began tracking these deaths in 1987. Dave knew that, in order to have a genuine impact on the safety of victims and to prevent such tragedies, police intervention had to be *proactive*, not *reactive*. He saw a need for a paradigm shift from incident-based policing to policing that more thoroughly took account of a victim's relationship history.

He was aware that research had been done to identify victims who were at the greatest danger of being killed. If practitioners in the field could identify High-Danger victims reliably, in a standardized, universal way, could they not also change the path of a negative outcome? In this way, couldn't they possibly change the paths of hundreds and thousands of negative outcomes?

Those thoughts weren't merely a layperson's intuition. As a retired police officer himself—serving with the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C. for 21 years—Dave spent much of his first career building programs and protocols around gaps in MPD's response.

As an officer, he had been involved in the 1971 May Day Protests, in which thousands of people flooded the streets of the nation's capital to protest the Vietnam War. The federal government and

MPD's response to the inundation was widely criticized, so Dave's job as Sargent for the next 6 years, largely, was to create agency policies around policing mass demonstration.

In 1987, just a few years before his retirement, Dave was asked to put his skills in directive-writing and policy-making to work on crafting a General Order on "intra-family offenses," as they were called back then. There was no particular reason Dave fell in to the project; as Lieutenant of the Bureau of Planning & Development, he was the only person fit for the job.

Around the same time, the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence needed a police liaison to help them surveil MPD's application of mandatory arrest in domestic violence cases. Again, Dave, purely by the function of his position, was the best person for the role. The study exposed significant non-compliance with mandatory arrest statutes. At a town hall meeting, advocates and victims gathered to decry the study's findings; Dave showed up to their gathering under direction to defend the agency, and in true Dave fashion, defied his orders and humbly apologized for the department's negligence and promised better.

Little did he know—little did anyone know—that his involvement in the D.C. Coalition's study, and the subsequent task forces that Dave created to explore other issues in MPD's domestic violence response, would lay the groundwork for his second career as an advocate in the field of domestic violence.

Years later, with this bug in his ear about demystifying intimate partner homicide, Dave did what Dave does best—he made friends with another bright mind in the field: Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell [hyperlink to Jackie's gratitude note] from Johns Hopkins University. Dave knew that Dr. Campbell's research on intimate partner fatality was already allowing nurses and advocates to assess victims' risk of homicide, and he coveted the application of her research to *his* discipline: law enforcement. So Dave called Dr. Campbell, they chatted, and a partnership was born.

People from various specialties across the state—researchers, advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, court officials—rallied around Dave's vision and Dr. Campbell's expertise. Over two years of product development and field-testing, the ragtag Lethality Assessment Committee had its solution: the LAP, an evidence-based tool and corresponding protocol that would help officers identify victims most at risk for homicide and immediately connect them to community-based services that could be life-saving.

Naturally, the hard work of disseminating the Committee's creation fell on Dave's shoulders. To get the LAP into the hands of Maryland officers, there was no legislation created, no funding stipulations mandated; Dave put on his salesman's hat, hopped in his car, and drove all around to

the diverse communities of Maryland to speak with Chiefs, command staff, patrol officers, and advocates.

Maybe it was Dave's Louisiana roots and Southern charm that led skeptical Chiefs to open their doors. Maybe it was his heart-on-the-sleeve disposition which allowed him to market the philosophy of the LAP so convincingly and passionately.

Whatever it was, no one could have imagined that the LAP would ever cover the state, let alone the country.

Over the next decade, Dave and MNADV realized that an indigenous program designed to address i problems in Maryland's domestic violence response had nationwide appeal. Through a string of awards from the Office on Violence Against Women out of the U.S. Department of Justice, Dave and a team of committed staff and consultants have trained, directly or indirectly, more than 600 law enforcement agencies in the LAP in 36 states and counting.

Sit down with Dave for a cup of coffee (black, 2 Splendas, probably at his favorite café Busboys and Poets) and he'll tell you that his work is not done. As LAP becomes more and more of a household initiative in police departments across the country, as hospitals and state departments and the criminal justice system implement the LAP, there will be new challenges as well as new opportunities to keep the LAP "vibrant and flourishing."

His advice? Never stop asking the question: "Did we make a difference in the life of a victim today?" At every juncture in this work, ask that question... if the answer is no, there's more work to do; if yes, there's another "today" tomorrow to reckon with.

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