

Letter to editor

Those of us working in the domestic violence field lost a champion with the death of Samuel Zoll on April 26, 2011. In 1978, Massachusetts passed the 209A law creating restraining orders, the first legal remedy to protect victims of domestic abuse from their perpetrators. That same year, HAWC was formed and four women from HAWC met with Judge Zoll to tell him about the devastating impact of domestic violence and the importance of this new legal response.

Just two years into his role as chief justice of district court, at a time when domestic abuse was still seen as a private family matter, Judge Zoll did something unheard of. He sponsored the very first training specifically for judges to educate them about the impact of domestic abuse and the court's critical role in responding.

Three decades later, when HAWC celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2008, we chose Samuel Zoll as the person we most wanted to thank for his visionary leadership. He was honored that we thought of him but because he still had a role in state government, he felt it would be a conflict of interest to accept an award. We asked him to promise to let us know the moment he was free and able to be celebrated for his pivotal role in strengthening the safety net for victims of abuse.

We are saddened that the opportunity to thank him publicly and in person has passed. Thanks to his courage and leadership, thousands of Massachusetts' victims of abuse and their children have moved out of abusive relationships to find safety, hope and freedom.

Candace Waldron

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