

Increase in reports of domestic violence prompts early start for poster campaign

By FAITH RAIDER
STAFF WRITER

Forty years ago, local artist and writer Silvia Carballo lived with a man who brought her flowers and wrote her poems.

But between the flowers and the poetry, he beat her so badly she thought he might kill her.

When she decided to leave him after he threw her from a moving car, she told herself, "Now I know I have made a mistake in putting up with so much, because it is not the person who hits who feels the pain."

The poem Carballo wrote about her experience with domestic violence, "Promesas," or "Promises," is featured on a new bilingual poster issued by the city of Santa Cruz Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

The commission had planned to release the poster as part of its efforts to reach out to women in the Latino community in September on Mexican Independence Day, but because of the unprecedented rise of women reaching out for help now, the commission decided to step up the implementation of its bilingual campaign.

Carballo, who is originally from Cuba, unveiled her poster at a forum on domestic violence in Santa Cruz yesterday afternoon. Defensa de Mujeres, which has a satellite office in Santa Cruz but is based in Watsonville, joined other North County domestic violence service providers at the forum.

Like directors from several other agencies, Defensa de Mujeres director Blanca Tavera said there has been an increase in the number of calls her organization has received since publicity around the Nicole Simpson murder case has focused attention on domestic violence.

Football great O.J. Simpson, who is charged with the killings of his ex-wife Nicole and her male friend Ronald Goldman, was convicted of spousal abuse in 1989.

Tavera said she has received calls from women reporting that their male partners have threatened to "do an O.J."

She said the number of incidents of domestic violence in Watsonville "is a huge number."

Watsonville police officers filed 291 crime reports citing incidents of domestic violence during 1993. Ninety-two cases resulted in arrest.

Tavera noted that domestic violence, one of the most under-reported crimes, is even less frequently reported in the Lati-



Poster by local artist and writer Silvia Carballo is part of an effort to reach out to women in the Latino community by the Santa Cruz Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.

no community, because for many Latinas reporting abuse is tantamount to betraying the family.

Tavera said that before a precursor of Defensa de Mujeres began providing services in Watsonville in the early 1990s few bilingual services were available for Latinas.

Defensa de Mujeres not only offers bilingual crisis counseling and advocacy, but its services are presented in a manner sen-

sitive to the Latino culture and its family values, she said. "We deliver our services in a context that is culturally accessible."

Ken Warwick, a probation officer who coordinates the Santa Cruz County Domestic Violence Diversion Program, discussed changes in the state law that created a diversion program for first-time perpetrators of domestic abuse.

As of July 1, the law requires

a longer diversion period with a lengthier period of counseling for the abuser. It also requires probation officers to contact the abused partners of the perpetrators.

Dee O'Brien, a member of the Battered Women's Task Force at the Santa Cruz YWCA, said she wished people would stop asking why a battered woman stays with her abuser and instead ask "Why does he beat her?"