

# Women's Resource Center provides support for victims of violence

By Sarah Kirby Transcript Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, October 15, 2015 6:03 pm

Kristy Stewart has many stories to tell. For 31 years, she has been with the Women's Resource Center in Norman, an agency dedicated to helping women who have been victimized by domestic and sexual violence.

Now serving as the executive director, Stewart remembers what it was like before the WRC, 222 E. Eufaula Street, was able to offer shelter for victims of domestic violence.

"Before the shelter started, they would put women in safe homes," Stewart said. "The police department would take up collections and put women some place safe, but it was really temporary and the families were in danger. If you think back to the 1980s, it was still a very new issue and people didn't know to handle that."

The shelter includes 20 beds, but that is not enough for the people who need them.

"We've had 23 to 25 people in our shelter," Stewart said. "We've literally had women sleeping on our couches, and we bought air mattress to accommodate a larger family... If we're full, and the couches and all the rooms are full, we refer them to some place else in the state. There are approximately 23 programs in the state, and they've all been full."

Stewart also recalled a time when a rape survivor underwent a forensic exam at a crisis center.

"Midway through the exam, she just couldn't take it any more. She was starting to have a lot of anxiety," Stewart said. "The nurse was able to stop the exam. We went outside of the room and took some time for her to breathe and really address that trauma she was feeling at the time and allow her to calm down and be prepared for the rest of the exam... If we had been in a hospital setting, that couldn't have happened in that way."

The WRC is now able to provide several services through its partnerships with the Norman Police Department, the University of Oklahoma Police Department, OU's Women's Outreach Center, the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department and United Way of Norman.

Times have changed, but the need to educate the community about sexual assault and domestic violence has not. The WRC will remain dedicated to that cause.

"I'm amazed after being here for 31 years how many people still don't know we're here and the services we provide," Stewart said. "I really hope that Cleveland County will be a community where we have no domestic abuse or sexual assault. I would love it if we were out of business because we

were so aware and we didn't tolerate violence against women and children.”

More information about the WRC is available online at [wrcnorman.com](http://wrcnorman.com).