

By Mary Pierce

Keith County News

Nearing the end of a turbulent year, the new executive director of the Sandhills Crisis Intervention Program is cautiously optimistic the agency can not only help victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with immediate needs but also help them learn to live full healthy lives.

“In the long term, I’d like to see us make a more permanent change in our clients’ lives,” SCIP Executive Director Kathleen Bauer said.

On Dec. 10, Bauer took over leadership of the non-profit agency that assists victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault in Arthur, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Keith and Perkins counties. The agency provides a variety of services, including emergency shelter, crisis counseling and advocacy.

As executive director, Bauer will write and manage all grants and create a budget. Overseeing the daily operations of the office also is her responsibility.

Organized in November 1985, SCIP had to close its doors last summer for three weeks due to a lack in funding.

“We still had volunteers manning the crisis line and clients still received services,” she said.

Creating even more of a financial challenge is that now a portion of its funding is on a reimbursement system, where the agency must first spend the money and then be reimbursed.

“They reimburse us on their timeline and we could easily have six months of money out there that we had to spend before we get any back.”

Despite the challenges, Bauer said the community recognized the program’s worth and helped SCIP continue its mission. The Keith County Commissioners donated \$7,000 and the Ogallala City Council

kicked in \$5,000. Pinnacle Bank also gave a \$5,000 donation to the organization. “Those were huge,” Bauer said.

Although the agency will continue to rely on grants and donations, Bauer said the financial situation is straightening out.

“The last few years have been rough but it’s important to me to see SCIP continue and, hopefully, grow,” she said.

In addition to bringing enthusiasm to the job, Bauer brings a year and a half experience as a SCIP volunteer outreach coordinator. She graduated Dec. 14 with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and a minor in business administration. Yet, Bauer said her “personal life experiences” most definitely would influence how she does her job.

“It gives you compassion. It gives you a better understanding of the nonsense of it all. Because people will say, ‘Why doesn’t she leave?’ Well, she doesn’t leave for so many reasons, the same reasons why she stays.”

While Bauer believes it is crucial that victims receive immediate services of shelter and other resources, just as crucial is empowering victims to make changes in their lives.

Bauer, in a healthy, loving relationship with her husband, Stacey, has six children, ranging in age from 5 to 20.

Bauer said the need for services continues to escalate, as does the population served by SCIP.

“We’re now dealing with a lot of vulnerable adults because, sometimes, people take advantage of them and abuse them because they are vulnerable. We actually have quite a few clients in

that criteria," she said.

SCIP also helps those who are stalked or bullied, as well as the elderly and those who are involved in human trafficking.

Bauer said being named SCIP's executive director is the culmination of her previous life experience, her education and a desire to help others.

She said she looks forward to learning a lot and providing more services to clients in need.

"I'm really excited to be here," she said.

In addition to Bauer, the SCIP staff included Legal and Client Advocate Carol Miller and Outreach Coordinator Carol Sherman.

The SCIP office is located at 100 E. 11th St. A 24-hour confidential crisis line is available by calling (308) 284-6055.