

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Mother of slain Auburn woman gives agency \$3K to combat domestic violence



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AUBURN | A mother should never have to bury her child.

Kelly Bell experienced the inexplicably painful truth behind that old adage when her 29-year-old daughter's life was cruelly cut short.

On Nov. 21, 2011, Bridget Bell was murdered inside her Auburn home by Ryan Brahney, her ex-boyfriend, while the couple's young son slept upstairs. Brahney was eventually convicted of second-degree murder following a grueling trial and sentenced to spend 54-years-to-life in prison for fatally stabbing the mother of his child.

As Bell raises Finn, Bridget's now 4-year-old son, and tries to figure out how to navigate life without her daughter, she is determined to help prevent other families from losing loved ones to domestic violence.

Bell — with the help of family and friends — organized Bikers 4 Bridget, a memorial motorcycle ride and barbecue that raises money to combat domestic violence while commemorating Bridget's life. During the event's second-annual run on May 18, Bikers 4 Bridget raised \$3,000 for the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's Domestic Violence Intervention Program.

Before presenting the check to the C/SCAA during a brief ceremony Tuesday afternoon at SK Post 1324 in Auburn, Bell said she had a specific purpose in mind for the money: teaching law enforcement officers how to handle cases of domestic violence.

"The officers ... need money for training," she explained. "That's what the money will go for."

Capt. Charles Augello, of the Auburn Police Department, said extra training helps both veteran and rookie officers be informed about new legislation.

"Training is an ongoing thing," he said. "It's definitely a good thing."

Bell's fight to combat domestic violence didn't end when she gave the agency the \$3,000 check.

Along with thinking of ways to expand next year's edition of Bikers 4 Bridget, Bell is working to establish a scholarship in Bridget's honor. She said the scholarship will go to a student looking to pursue a degree in the culinary arts field — something her daughter had a passion for.

Before accepting the check, Sarah Barnard, director of C/SCAA's Domestic Violence Intervention Program, said both the Cayuga County Sheriff's Office and APD have expressed interest in receiving more information about how to interact with victims of domestic violence.

Thanks to Bell and Bikers 4 Bridget, Barnard said C/SCAA now has the funds to make the requested training a reality.

"We're very excited," she said. "We're just very grateful."