

## Milford woman dies at hands of husband despite tougher domestic violence laws

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MILFORD -- Cathy Fox informed her Facebook friends on Sept. 1 that she was single.

If only it was that easy.

Cathy, 51, had filed for divorce on Aug. 17, having her husband, Ken, served with the papers while he was in custody at the Bridgeport Correctional Center on a domestic violence charge.

On Sept. 23, 10 days after he finally was able to post bond -- which a judge reduced from \$50,000 to \$1,000 -- and get out of jail, Ken, 50, fatally stabbed and choked his wife of 20 years, then hanged himself in their home on Branca Court.

Will Duchon, Cathy Fox's first husband, said her death was a shock, but not a surprise.

"We'd seen this for about 10 years. Ken had a lot of anger in him. He was very withdrawn and hardly said a word, but he'd get hostile sometimes," Duchon said.

Victims' advocates say that Connecticut is a safer place for women than it was a year ago, before reforms of bail bond laws, the creation of a statewide task force, increased funding and other new law enforcement efforts were enacted such as monitoring bracelets.

But still, Cathy Fox is dead.

And family and friends who gathered at a memorial service for Fox on Saturday believe this shouldn't have happened.

"This didn't have to happen," said Shaunessy Tchir, who knew Fox from having worked with her son, Eric, at Black Birch Farm, a Milford kennel. "She was such a good person. She will be missed."

"There's a lot of things that could have been done," added Eddy Carrion, of New Haven. "Letting that guy out on just \$1,000 bond shouldn't have been one of them."

Privately, friends said Cathy had problems coping with anxiety and stress stemming from the marriage.

Some suggest that judges and, if necessary, state legislators look at this case and do their best in formulating policy to prevent another family from experiencing what one friend said is the "heart-wrenching pain we are feeling."

Last year, 21 people died in domestic violence incidents in the state, said Debra Greenwood, executive director of the Center for Women and Families. There are about six so far this year, officials said, heading



into Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which is observed each October.

"I do think women in Connecticut are safer than they were a year ago," said Susan DeLeon, executive director of The Umbrella, which serves the lower Naugatuck Valley and Milford.

The state's emergency shelters for domestic violence victims are now staffed 24 hours a day, and money from marriage license fees is funneled into an account that can be used to relocate victims out of state, DeLeon said.

Cathy Fox had not sought services from the Center for Women and Families in Bridgeport or The Umbrella, staff at those agencies said.

"She probably didn't even know that she could access our services," said Debra Greenwood, executive director of the Center for Women and Families. "It's a sad thing, but statistically, there are seven incidents of abuse before a victim leaves for a shelter."

One new initiative that might have helped her is a pilot program that outfits abusers who have violated a restraining order with GPS monitoring bracelets.

State Superior Court in Bridgeport participates in the program. "We haven't seen a report yet, but it has definitely made victims feel safer," Greenwood said.

State's Attorney Kevin Lawlor said the bracelets signal police if a person is within a half-mile of a location that he is not permitted to be by court order.

"It gives police an opportunity to intervene," Lawlor said. "Like anything else it costs money, and the question becomes how do we pay for the monitoring?"

The pilot program was not in place in Milford.

Another new law that is meant to protect victims of domestic abuse is the change in the amount of bond a person accused of domestic violence has to post.

This law was put in place following a January 2010 domestic violence case in West Haven, in which a man who returned home an hour after being released without bond killed his wife.

Lawlor issued a report that recommended higher bonds and tougher rules for bail bondsmen.

Those reforms and others were adopted by the Statewide Domestic Violence Prevention Task Force, organized by House Speaker Christopher Donovan, D-Meriden.

The new rules require that people arrested on domestic violence charges put up cash or other assets to get out on bond. Violating a court order is now a felony charge, but jail is not automatic for violators.

When Ken Fox returned to his home in violation of a protective court order his wife sought, he was arrested on \$50,000 bond, and ended up spending more than a month in jail.

But Judge Richard Arnold lowered the bond to \$2,500, over Lawlor's objections, then weeks later to \$1,000, which Fox was able to post. Arnold, who did not respond to a request for comment, noted in court

that Fox had no criminal record and had served 30 days in jail. According to the bond reduction hearing transcript, Arnold acknowledged that Ken Fox had a prior domestic matter, and he completed the Family Violence Education Program in 2001. Volume Soup Recipes Hairstyles Recipes  
 Sports Business Virtual Makeover Best Eye Cream Best Beauty Trends Amazing Soup Diet  
 Greenwood said bonds need to be extremely high in domestic violence cases. Medium Length Low Calorie  
 Entertainment Hairstyles Stations Hair Recipes  
 "Restraining orders are just pieces of paper. Whenever something like this happens our feeling is that it should be very difficult for a batterer to get out of jail," she said. "It needs to be treated as a life or death matter because, as we've seen, it can be." Get Rid of Ever Hair Best Sandwiches  
 DeLeon said there are arguments to be made for and against high bonds and keeping batterers in jail. Rachael Ray Recipes  
 People who depend on their partners for financial support may be without food if they put them in jail, she said. Privacy Policy Going Green Tips Women Best Beauty Groceries  
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 Duchon said he moved to Connecticut from White Plains, N.Y. in 2001 because of a violent incident between Ken Fox and Duchon's children, Lauren and Matt. Hairstyles Cake Recipes  
 "He physically assaulted Cathy and Matt, and I came to take my son out of that house," Duchon said. Best Health Grilled Chicken  
 "Lauren was already out on her own. I don't know if Cathy reported it, but she did leave for a while." Eye Makeup Tips

Ken Fox worked for the U.S. Postal Service at one time and later at Home Depot, Duchon said. A police report indicated that Fox was working as a loader at Pepsi Bottling Co. in Stratford before his arrest in August.

Cathy Fox likely didn't see herself as a victim, right up until the moment she was attacked. A vivacious woman who was close to her mother and her 8-year-old granddaughter, she had recently gone back to college. She had worked at Tutor Time in Milford and as a teacher's aide at the Wooster School in Stratford before being laid off, her friend Brad Marcus said.

Marcus, of Milford, said he's been Cathy Fox's friend for 12 years, but never met her husband. "My wife and I would invite them to things, but only Cathy would come. Cathy came to my daughter's bat mitzvah; she said Ken couldn't make it.

"I used to work in Blockbuster, and Cathy and Eric (her son with Ken) would come in all the time, but never her husband. You'd never even hear about him." Marcus said.

Court records indicate the Foxes were having financial problems. Court officials agreed to waive filing fees when Cathy Fox noted on her form that she has been out of work since January 2010.

The couple had been unable to refinance their home and owed \$45,000 in student loans for Cathy and Eric, \$3,000 on department store credit accounts and \$7,000 to Milford Hospital, according to the divorce filing. She listed a car worth \$5,000, personal property worth \$2,500 and \$100 in a checking account as her assets.

Financial pressures from the poor economy can ratchet up family tensions and that may lead to domestic violence incidents, Greenwood said.

Duchon, the music director at the Monroe Congregational Church, said he can surmise what happened in

the Foxes' home Sept. 23. "She had filed for divorce and he wasn't supposed to be there, but he came to try to talk her out of it. Cathy had a very dominant personality and she wouldn't change her mind."

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