

## 12 Steps

Parole agent develops method for helping batterers and stopping the cycle of violence. **Vitality/A6**



## On the Fly

Saugus boys' and girls' swim teams defeat Valencia at the Santa Clarita Pool in Foothill action. **Sports/B1**



## SCV Weather

### COOLER

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High of 68.



**Weather Page: A9**

# THE SIGNAL



Thursday

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# 12 Steps to Healing

Local parole agent develops special method for helping batterers — and stopping the cycle of domestic violence.

By **Diana Sevanian**  
*Signal Vitality Editor*

Most people think the safest place to be is within their own home, but judging from the fact that 70,000 domestic violence calls were made to Los Angeles law enforcement agencies last year, the home can certainly be a place of danger, even death.

Some 42 percent of women homicide victims are killed by their spouses/male significant others. Furthermore, according to a Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women domestic violence report, in 70 percent of homes where the wife is beaten, the children are also victims of abuse.

These batterers, who are most often husbands or boyfriends, tend to have many complex problems that contribute to their abusive behavior — issues that are not always remedied through the courts, incarceration or traditional therapy.

In a desire to bring healing and

safety to batterers and their families, licensed clinical social worker/parole agent Kenn Hicks has developed a novel 12-Step Batterers Prevention Program.

"To my knowledge, this is the only 12-step program designed for batterers in the nation," said Hicks, an SCV resident who works for the California Department of Corrections.

Twelve-step programs provide realistic tools of recovery necessary to affect the personality-behavioral changes needed to nurture and sustain the recovery process.

Composed of peer groups that provide emotional and spiritual support for one another, these programs help to enhance the quality of life of the recovering person, as well as benefit the people whose lives they affect.

With the assistance of facilitators, 12-Step programs help those who are living unhealthy/unsafe/violent lifestyles and want to make a change for the better.

Whether the unhealthy lifestyle is a result of addiction, past traumas (including physical, emotional or sexual abuse), divorce or physical or mental problems, 12-Step programs have helped millions of people turn their lives around.

Hicks said his 12-step holistic approach involves victims, family members, the batterer and his potential victims.

The main concept of the program is it helps the batterer understand and responsibly manage anger, and learn healthy ways of diffusing feelings without resorting to verbal or physical attacks.

"It focuses on the batterer learning to control his own violence, but not releasing the control and power over the victim," said Hicks, an approved domestic violence facilitator, who is certified by the Los Angeles County Probation Department Monitoring Unit.

"It also helps protect our communities by reintegrating parolees back into society as productive members, and not ones who will commit more crimes."

Originally from the Bronx, N.Y., Hicks graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1979 with a master's degree in social work (MSW) and specialized in group therapy. Soon after, he moved to California, which was then, according to Hicks, wide open to group dynamics and social workers with new ideas.

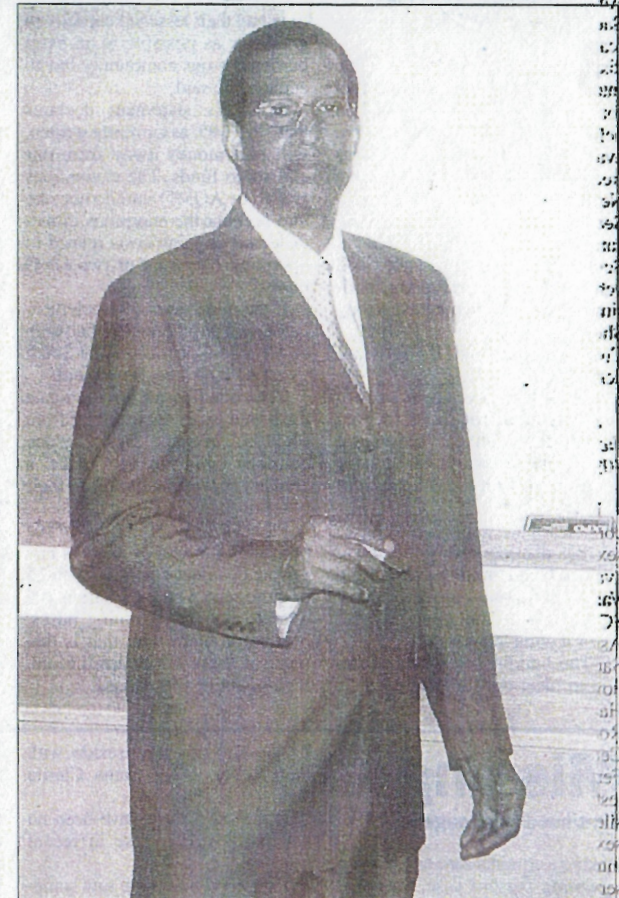
Upon entering a private practice, Hicks worked primarily in group therapy with depressed patients who were divorced or separated, as well as with youth who had behavior problems.

Hicks maintains that the group process, a fundamental element of 12-step programs, has proven to be the most successful type of therapy for almost all individuals.

For more than 20 years, he has facilitated many types of groups, including youth, adult and the elderly.

In the early-to-mid-90s public awareness of crimes against women and children, particularly physical and sexual abuse, and stalking, was greatly increased due to escalating crimes of that nature.

"In 1995 I realized that the entire country was experiencing serious problems with domestic violence," Hicks said. "I also noticed that batterers in California who were sent to state prison were not mandated to have any type of batterer's prevention treatment once they were released."



DIANA SEVANIEN/The Signal

Parole agent Kenn Hicks believes his 12-Step Batterer's Program can help batterers understand and manage their anger, as well as take responsibility for their actions.