

April 20, 2011 Press Release

Could Newburgh Drowning Have Been Averted?

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SPRING VALLEY, N.Y. — Funeral services are scheduled Thursday for LaShanda Armstrong and three of her children, who died when the Newburgh woman drove into the Hudson River last week.

Armstrong had filed an order of protection from an abusive boyfriend, reports say.

Often in such cases, according to Sonia Murdock, co-founder and executive director of the Postpartum Resource Center of New York, the problem may be rooted in disorders tied to having given birth within the previous 12-month period. An 11-month-old child was among those who drowned.

"Women who may be going through a domestic-violence situation or other factors may not connect it back to postpartum depression."

Tragedies such as this could be avoided, Murdock says, if more people knew about the statewide toll-free number for the Postpartum Resource Center: 1-855-631-0001.

Wendy Isnardi says she might have wound up harming the child to which she gave birth in 2002 had she not been aware of the resource center. Isnardi has just published a book about her experiences with a form of obsessive compulsive disorder.

"It manifested itself into very, very bad thoughts. Thoughts of harm towards the baby, thoughts of harm to myself — very, very graphic in nature. And me, not realizing that that was a symptom of OCD, I automatically thought that I was losing my mind, I was going crazy and needed to be put away."

As many as 50,000 New York women and families are possibly affected each year, Murdock says, and they should know that it's OK to ask around for help such as that offered by her organization.

"Many may feel ashamed, so overwhelmed, fearful — the stigma that they need to be doing everything themselves — and afraid to speak up."

Isnardi, who now works with Murdock at the resource center, says she wants all parents in New York and nationwide to know there are answers and help for the problems they may face.

"Nobody told me prior to this — and that's why I named the book "Nobody told Me" — until I got in touch with Sonia, did I know that something like this actually existed. I thought moms that had depression were weak or they were really, truly crazy — until it happened to me."

Murdock says the center recently received a \$100,000 federal grant that will go toward increasing the training, support, education, and resources her group provides.

Mark Scheerer, Public News Service – NY

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