

COMPASSIONATE BOSSES

KUDOS to Jim Trotter regarding bosses who are compassionate toward employees who are victims of domestic violence (Column, July 24).

The anonymous Santa Clara County boss of the story should be honored not just for his compassion, insight, and good judgment, but also for his courage in tackling a very serious problem in an innovative manner. As illustrated in Trotter's column, the victim of domestic violence is often re-victimized by her employer, who just wants the problem to "go away."

This kind of employer makes the victim-employee's work environment more difficult, in the hope that the person will quit, or that an excuse will be found to fire her. Too many employers might be inclined to discipline or reprimand a supervisor who exercised the intuitive and empathetic approach of the boss portrayed in the column.

Santa Clara County has the unique opportunity to be recognized as a shining example of leadership, and to establish a "gold standard" for the public and private sector employers of the community.

To this end, the Violence in the Workplace Subcommittee of the Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council is working to develop employer protocols on temporary leaves of absence for employees who need to move their residence, who are required to seek appropriate medical care for themselves or their family, or who must attend to criminal justice system matters. The Polaroid Corporation has had such a policy in place for some time, and it is used successfully. We should have one in this county.

We have the knowledge and the resources in Santa Clara County to make a difference to the victims of domestic violence and to their families. The only question is: Will we?

- Judge Eugene M. Hyman
Santa Clara County Municipal Court