

Learn the signs, solutions

By Jody Althouse — State College - Centre Daily Times

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Domestic violence — here, in Pennsylvania? Unfortunately, yes. Unfortunately, domestic violence is found everywhere. People in general don't want to believe that domestic violence happens in their neighborhood, but it does.

The fact is domestic violence can and does happen in all communities, in all income and education levels, with victims and perpetrators representing a diverse cross-section of society. Domestic violence can happen to couples who are married, living together or who are dating. Where someone lives has little to do with the people they live with and what goes on behind their closed doors.

What exactly constitutes domestic violence? Domestic violence is not about love and it is not a "crime of passion." Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner, according to the National Domestic Violence Abuse Hotline. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month — a time to mourn those who died, celebrate those who have survived, promote the availability of free and confidential help, and encourage community members to get involved in efforts to stop the violence.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed. That same year marks the initiation of the first national domestic violence toll-free hotline. In 1989, Congress passed Public Law 101-112 designating October of that year as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

How do you know if you are a victim? There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of your partner. If you feel like you have to "walk on eggshells" around your partner — constantly watching what you say and do in order to avoid a blow-up — chances are your relationship is unhealthy and abusive. Other signs that you may be in an abusive relationship include a partner who belittles you, tries to control you and gives you feelings of self-loathing, helplessness and desperation. For more information visit www.aardvarc.org.

How can you help others — or get help for yourself? To stop domestic violence, we all need to be part of the solution. Helping a friend who is being abused, speaking up about abuse, educating yourself and others, and supporting your local domestic violence program are all offered by the Domestic Violence Awareness Project as examples of things which can help.

Through the Centre County Women's Resource Center, help is available to callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Hotline advocates are available for victims and anyone calling on their behalf to provide crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals to agencies in Centre County.

If you or someone you know is frightened about something in your relationship, please call the Women's Resource Center hotline, toll-free, at 1-877-234-5050. The services provided by the Women's Resource Center are for women, men, children and teens. Services are free, confidential, safe and professional.

To mark National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Harrison's Wine Grill and Catering, on East College Avenue, is offering donations to the Women's Resource Center.

For every one who dines there from Oct. 3 to Oct. 16 and mentions their support of the Women's Resource Center, Harrison's will donate 20 percent of the dinner check, before taxes and tips, to the center.

To learn more about Domestic Violence, please visit www.ccwrc.org or "like" the Centre County Women's Resource Center on Face-book. *Jody Althouse is director of outreach and communications at the Centre County Women's Resource Center. She can be contacted at jalthouse@ccwrc.org or 238-7066.*

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | BY THE NUMBERS

The Pennsylvania Coalition to End Domestic Violence (www.pcadv.org) said that in fiscal year 2009-2010 in Pennsylvania:

- 91,999 adults and children were recipients of domestic violence services
- 8,987 residents were provided emergency shelter
- 236,314 shelter days were provided
- 135,262 hotline calls were answered

In Centre County during that time, according to the Centre County Women's Resource Center (www.ccwrc.org):

- 918 adults and children were recipients of domestic violence services
- 166 people were assisted with Protection from Abuse Orders
- 108 residents were provided emergency shelter
- 3,121 shelter days were provided •753 hotline calls were answered

Read more: <http://www.centredaily.com/2011/10/01/2934340/learn-the-signs-solutions.html#ixzz1a1k8IP5w>