

WomeneWS

Women's Center of Montgomery County

Executive Director's Report



Save the Date!

Spring is Coming and we need to Celebrate!

It's Time to Celebrate Family and friends!!

It's Time to Celebrate Mother's Day!!

Join the Women's Center of Montgomery County
for a fun afternoon gathering of our community of friends and families.

Brunch, Music and Conversation
In Support of the Center and our work to end domestic violence.

Meadowlands Country Club
Blue Bell, PA

Sunday, April 26, 2009
11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Save the Date!

Women's Center of Montgomery County hosts our

Fifth Annual 5K Walkathon:

“TAKING STEPS TO END ABUSE”

Do your part to STOP domestic violence in our community and raise awareness!

Join us at Montgomery County Community College
Blue Bell, PA

Saturday, September 12, 2009
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Online registration will be available after June 1st!

For more information on how to on the Special Event Planning Committee for this event,
contact Maria at our Elkins Park office at 215-635-7340.

Advocates' Corner

By Denise Flynn, WAP Program Director

Chris Brown is the latest celebrity that has allegedly used his hands and anger to express his feelings, to control and exert power over his girlfriend, Rihanna. Apparently, these two pop musicians were a couple for some time and this 19 year old man has done what he publicly said he would never do because he witnessed his mom being beaten/abused. Too many people/abusers publicly show one face and privately another darker, violent side. It doesn't matter if the person is a celebrity or your neighbor next door, a member of your church or a government official.

What does an abuser or victim look like? What happens behind closed doors when a victim decides not to be a victim anymore? A friend of mine wrote this poem/song to share with someone who may relate, who may be going through

~

Anguished Woman by Janice Johnson

I guess I made you mad again; Don't know what I did
I guess I caused you pain again, 'cause you're not talkin'
Sorry I hurt you, never meant for that to be
I love you and you know it, please talk to me!!

In spite of all we're going through,
The passions' there between me and you.
But when you grow silent, a change in attitude i find.
You assault me daily, and I'm about to lose my mind.

I see your anger rising when we both disagree
You advance with hands clenched tightly in aggression for me
Well, I'm not gonna take it this time, no! No! No!
Don't push me, don't shove me!! I'll get my things and i'll go!!

I'll take the kids to mama, get me some help from the state,
Get some more education and redirect my fate.
Can't let this stuff get to me, can't let it bend my mind
My belief in a higher power, says I'm gonna be just fine.

I know that me and my kids have had enough of this trip
When you look for me, and you will
Just remember, remember, remember this –
Together we were riding high, before your tricks and ruse
But no more will I take..... your physical abuse!!!!

I'm saying goodbye, good bye baby. I'm gone, I'm out.
Ain't taking no more abusiveness from you, no matter what.
I can do bad by myself, I don't need you.
Nobody else is gonna be beating on me...

Norristown Volunteer Update

IN-SERVICES

Our next in-service is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2009 from 1-3pm in the Norristown office. The guest speaker will be from the Open Arms program, a supervised visitation program located in Norristown. We will also discuss office updates and advocate issues.

LEGAL REMEDIES

The next Legal Remedies Workshop will be on Tuesday, March 17th, 2009 from 4:30-6:30pm in the Norristown office, attorney to be determined. The discussion will be open to civil and family law. The information sessions are held at our Norristown office at 18 West Airy Street, 4th floor. Please call 610-279-7474 to register to attend. Also, please refer a family member or friend to this valuable program!

A NEW KIND OF SUPPORT GROUP

Time for Healing Spiritual Based Support Group:

Healing from domestic violence hurts and other life issues that have left one broken and scarred. Fridays from 6-7:30pm at the Norristown office: 18 West Airy Street, 4th Floor

Contact Denise at 215-681-6595 or the Women's Center at 610-279-7474

Keep warm!

Jenn B.

Pottstown's Potpourri

Making a change, even when it is for the better, can be a scary prospect. How many times do we encounter the fear of change versus the fear of the abuse when helping victims of domestic violence? There seems to be some comfort in what is known even if what is known is proving to be a detriment. To take the risk to venture into the unknown in an effort to change and, hopefully, improve the existing circumstances requires courage, which is what we see victim's demonstrate to us on a regular basis.

This month, the Pottstown office is going to practice a little of what we preach. We are going to take the risk and make the significant change of relocating our office in Pottstown. It has not been an easy decision to leave 555 E. High Street after so many years but it has become necessary to provide the best possible service to those in our community who need us. In an effort to be more accessible to the disabled, and to be in closer proximity to other service entities that would benefit our clients, and to further secure the safety of all, the decision was made to move our office in to 1800 E High Street, Suite 350.

We have been fortunate in our efforts to relocate because we have secured the blessing, in a very tangible way, of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. Their support in this undertaking is much appreciated. Support is always important when making a decision to make a significant change, which is why it is important for us at the Women's Center to continue to provide our services/support to the victims of domestic violence in our communities. After all, the decisions to relocate faced by our clients are much more monumental than the one we just faced to move our office.

Kristine Wickward
Legal Advocate - Pottstown

“Parents Know Less Than They Think They Do” – The Problem of Teenage Dating Violence”

Article submitted by WCMC Volunteer Pauline M.

Who among us looks back on our high school days with nostalgia and fondness? Good friends, sports, schoolwork, role models among seniors and teachers, fun dates and crushes. *Well it's just not like that anymore!* Competitiveness for scholarships, poor academic standards, lack of resources, bullying (in person and online), cliques, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, media influences and the importance of image, eating disorders, Ritalin, steroids, poverty, and inequality make school a hostile environment for many. Only the strong can survive unscathed. Add to this troubling mix the growing problem of teenage dating violence, and parents who could never believe that their precious child is either a victim or an abuser. Many parents prefer to believe that it only happens to kids from ‘bad’ homes, or that their relationship with their child is too close for disclosure not to happen, or that if there are incidents reported they are not that ‘serious’.

Research has shown that relationship violence is the number one cause of injury to women between the ages of 15-24, that 70% of pregnant teenagers have been assaulted by their partners, that 38% of date rape victims are young women between the ages of 14 and 17, and that 24% of female homicide victims are between 15 and 24 years old.

One in three teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped choked or physically hurt by their dating partner. One third of teens report experiencing some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse. Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 are *the most vulnerable* to domestic violence, experiencing the highest rates per capita of non-fatal intimate partner violence.

Research also indicates a direct correlation between youth victimization, mental health problems and delinquent behavior – 92% of female offenders report being victims of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse before entering the juvenile justice system.

Teenage victims of dating violence are more likely to engage in high risk behaviors, including substance abuse, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy and suicidal behavior.

This is not a problem only experienced in the highly developed consumer oriented culture of the USA. It is a worldwide issue. In England, a survey conducted by the teenage magazine ‘Sugar’ in 2005 revealed that 20% of teenage girls had been hit by their boyfriends, 4% were subjected to regular attacks and a further 16% had been hit at least once. Worryingly, 31% believed it was acceptable for a boy to act in an aggressive way if his girlfriend had cheated on him. This survey of 2,000 teenage girls concluded that there was a very real issue about self worth among teenage girls, and that a generation of girls is growing up believing that aggression in relationships and violence at home are an acceptable part of life. The survey revealed a clear link between girls experiencing domestic abuse at home and then suffering abuse from their boyfriends – almost 1 out of 3 (31%) who were hit regularly by their boyfriends had seen their parents hit each other.

Teenage dating violence is similar to adult domestic violence in several ways – it affects people from all socio-economic groups, races and religions, heterosexual and homosexual/gay relationships. It is a behavior that repeats and escalates over time. The ‘*Teen Power and Control Wheel*’ (attached), is a version of the adult Power and Control wheel, a useful tool which demonstrates how certain behaviors contribute to the cyclical nature of domestic violence, the tactics used, and how these all work together.

But there are also a number of differences between teenage and adult domestic violence.

Teenagers forming their first relationships do not always know what a positive romance looks like, they do not know their legal rights, nor do they trust the police or the adults around them. They are afraid of disappointing their parents or their parents forcing them to break up with someone they truly care about. They confuse jealousy with love, and they believed being involved with someone is the most important thing in their life. And of course the abuser acts nice – sometimes.

The **isolation** experienced by victims of teenage dating violence makes it hard for them to develop new and mature relationships with peers of both sexes, they never feel emotionally independent, they do not develop their personal beliefs and values systems, and it becomes harder to stay focused in school and get good grades. The isolation from a teenager’s own social circle is an abusive behavior that is particularly effective because peers play such a pivotal role.

When and where does teenage abuse happen? Quite often at school, - in the halls, the classroom, the parking lot, on the bus, at sporting events and at dances. The school environment has unique characteristics that inhibit victims from reporting abuse. Victims may attend classes with their abusers and are often under pressure to recant when they have made a report. In school the abuse is often public with peers witnessing the acts, but it can also occur at the girl's home and often at the weekends when most dates occur. Ostracism from a teenager's social group as a result of reporting abuse is a powerful form of retribution among adolescents.

Dating violence can also affect boys, but in such cases less violence is used. Girls experience the more severe forms of violence and are more likely to be punched and forced to engage in sexual activity against their will, whereas boy victims are more likely to be pinched, slapped or scratched.

Teenage girls who are in abusive relationships are at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, or of becoming pregnant, as the power dynamics within the relationship do not allow them to negotiate condom use. Girls are more likely to report abuse if they have been on 5 or fewer dates with the abuser. The longer she has been in the relationship the less likely she is to report abuse. Teenagers remain in these relationships for many reasons, including fear of their partner, self blame, loyalty and love, social or religious stigma, lack of understanding, and the belief that dating violence is a private matter, embarrassment or denial. If they are under 21, they may not report because illegal alcohol consumption was involved.

And what about the 'Tweenies'?

A '*Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study*' produced in July 2008 looked at 11-14 year olds and reported from their sample group that dating relationships started younger than realized, and nearly half of 11-14 year olds had been in a dating relationship. Sex was considered a part of the dating relationship by a surprising number of tweens, one in three said that touching and feeling was part of a dating relationship, 27% said oral sex was part of it, and 28% believed that having sex was part of the dating relationship. Understandably, most parents believed it was not their tween who was having sex.

Significant levels of abusive behavior were reported in these relationships, and the data revealed that early sexual activity influenced dating violence and abuse among teenagers. Among 11-14 year olds, 62% knew friends who had been verbally abused (called stupid, ugly or worthless) by their boyfriend; 41% knew friends insulted via phone, IM, social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook; 36% knew peers who had been pressurized by a boyfriend/girlfriend to do things they did not want to, and 14% of the 13-14 year olds knew peers who had been hit, kicked or punched in anger by their partner.

It seems that today's tween behavior may well predict a new wave of abuse among teens in the near future, and something has to be done to stop it.

What can parents do?

Parents must learn and look for the warning signs; they must teach self respect; they must talk to their teen and focus on how the teen is feeling, not putting down the partner; they can offer another trusted adult to talk to if the teen is finding it hard to share with a parent; not to judge but to listen and support, and to take whatever safety measures are necessary when the teen has decided to end the relationship.

What can WCMC do? We can advocate for teen victims and provide peer victim services. We can ask that shelter services are expanded to accommodate younger victims. We can develop local teen hotlines to assist victims and *abusers* (dating and family violence committed by juveniles are predictive of future violent behavior); develop teen mentor programs especially for those who do not have family support. We can expand our prevention programs to include education about the different forms of dating violence; understanding of the dynamics of power and control; identifying the warning signs early; to look at the negative outcomes associated with abuse (STDs, pregnancy, HIV) and how to avoid them; and to teach teens how to avoid abusive relationships as well as how to *help a friend* who might be in one. These programs could also be offered to parents, and the often overlooked Gay and Lesbian communities.

As for the Tweenies, perhaps we can campaign for our President to assist and finance abuse prevention programs, after all, he has two of his own to raise and protect.

A Glimpse of Domestic Violence Issues around the world: (From the North Belfast News 20th of February 2009, By Gemma Burns)

Double the incidents of domestic violence

Police officers in North Belfast's specialized domestic abuse unit are working on cases where women have been left barely recognizable after being hit repeatedly round the face with candlesticks or beaten so fiercely they were hospitalized for days.

The shocking incidents were recalled by Police Inspector Paul Noble as the latest statistics show the rate of domestic violence is disturbingly higher in North Belfast than any other part of the North. The most recent police figures for April to November 2008 show that there were 1375 reported incidents with a domestic motivation in North Belfast.

This is more than double that of south Belfast at 593 and significantly higher than the east of the city with 880 and west Belfast with 919.

Inspector Noble heads up North Belfast's Public Protection Unit (PPU), a specialized unit set up to deal with the reports of domestic abuse alongside other areas such as child abuse, managing sex offenders and locating missing persons under one specialized team.

The PPU was set up in North Belfast eight months ago and staff are dealing on a day to day basis with the horrific injuries inflicted within homes all over the area.

And, as typical with domestic violence, these shocking rates are just the tip of the iceberg as many more cases go under the radar. Women's Aid (equivalent to WCMC) estimates that an average of 30 incidents take place before an incident is officially reported.

Inspector Noble appealed for anyone suffering abuse within the home to come forward and break the cycle of misery. "If it happens once it will happen again. It doesn't change until someone makes a change. Speak to the police, speak to a support organization because if it's done once it will be done again," he said.

Although the incidents with a domestic motivation can mean female violence against her male partner, violence within a same sex relationship and a child's violence against a parent, the overwhelming majority of the cases are male violence against a female partner.

A new grouping the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), is about to be set up in North Belfast to help tackle all the issues arising from domestic violence.

"MARAC will include the police, social services, Women's Aid and the Housing Executive (equivalent of Section 8 housing). Once a case of domestic abuse is identified and classed as risky with potential for serious harm it is referred onto MARAC," he said.

"We meet and discuss the case and do something about it quickly, be it that the Housing Executive says they can get the victim of the crime rehoused or get the alleged perpetrator of the violence moved.

"Women's Aid can offer additional support and maybe help the person get a non molestation order to offer them increased protection and social services can protect any children in the house.

"MARAC will address more risky cases and hopefully address them so that action is taken speedily to try and break the cycle. Because essentially domestics are cyclical and we can be going back to the same ones again and again."

continued on Page 7

(North Belfast is an area of Belfast of approximately five square miles and a population of 90,000. There are many deprived neighborhoods in this part of the city of Belfast, and tensions between Catholics and Protestants still run high)

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS ON GUNS FOR DOMESTIC ABUSERS

Washington, DC - The United States Supreme Court today rejected arguments by the gun lobby and convicted wife beater Randy Edward Hayes that federal law allowed Hayes to possess firearms, upholding the broad federal ban on gun possession by convicted misdemeanor domestic violence abusers. The Court cited arguments made by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence about the risks posed by firearms in the hands of domestic abusers.

The 7-2 ruling in *United States v. Hayes* was a blow to gun lobby groups that had urged the Court to severely narrow the federal Lautenberg Amendment that bars gun possession by abusers convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence. The Court reversed an earlier ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit that, if upheld, would have allowed convicted abusers in at least 25 states to rearm themselves with firearms.

“In its first gun case since the landmark *Heller* decision, the Court wisely upheld this reasonable restriction,” said Brady Center President Paul Helmke. “Today’s ruling is the right one for victims of domestic abuse and to protect law enforcement officers who are our first responders to domestic violence incidents.”

“Today, the Supreme Court sided with abused women and children and against the gun lobby,” said Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), a leader in the fight to reduce gun violence and the author of the domestic violence gun ban. “Since it was enacted, my domestic violence gun ban has kept more than 150,000 guns out of the hands of domestic abusers. We know a gun in the home makes it much more likely that domestic abuse results in death and today’s decision means we can continue keeping guns out of dangerous hands and saving innocent lives.”

Congress enacted the Lautenberg Amendment in 1996 to prohibit abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes from possessing firearms. In April 2007, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a wife beater’s conviction for illegal gun possession by narrowly interpreting the Lautenberg Amendment as only barring gun possession by abusers convicted of laws specifically barring domestic violence, rather than all persons convicted of domestic violence under general assault and battery laws.

The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, joined by law enforcement organizations, had filed a brief in support of the ban on gun possession by all abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, which was cited by the Court. The brief highlighted the great danger that armed abusers pose to family members of these abusers as well as law enforcement officers summoned to address such violence. On average, more than three people are killed by intimate partners every day in this country.

Intimate partner homicides account for up to one-half of all homicides of females. Every year between 1,000 and 1,600 women die at the hands of their male partners, and 14 percent of all police officer deaths occurred during a response to domestic violence calls.

The groups that joined the Brady Center brief are the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Major Cities Chiefs, National Sheriffs’ Association, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, Police Executive Research Forum, National Black Police Association, National Latino Peace Officers Association, Legal Community Against Violence, and School Safety Advocacy Council.

The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence is a national non-profit organization working to reduce the tragic toll of gun violence in America, through education, research, and legal advocacy. The programs of the Brady Center complement the legislative and grassroots mobilization of its sister organization, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence with its dedicated network of Million Mom March Chapters.

Women's Center Evening Book Club Schedule Spring 2009

Wed., Mar. 18 th 7:30 p.m.	The Tattooed Girl Discussion Leader: Ruth	Author: Joyce Carol Oates Hostess: Sunny
Wed. April 15 th 7:30 pm	Little Women Discussion Leader: Elaine	Author: Louisa May Alcott Hostess: Vivian
Wed., May 20 th 7:30 pm	The Reluctant Fundamentalist Discussion Leader: Linda	Author: Mohsin Hamid Hostess: Elaine
June	The Glass Castle Discussion Leader: Suzanne	Author: Jeannette Walls Hostess: Judy
July	Amsterdam Discussion Leader: Dottie	Author: Ian McEwan Hostess: Dottie

Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Wednesday of every month.

Time: 7:30 p.m. social/8:00 p.m. discussion

Regrets only to hostess appreciated.

For more information, contact Sunny Letizi at 215-576-6215. All are welcome!

Women's Center of Montgomery County

Elkins Park Office

215-635-7344

FAX: 215-635-7347

Thrift Shop: 215-885-0620

Norristown Office

610-279-1548

FAX: 610-279-7740

Pottstown Office

610-970-7363

FAX: 610-970-0705

Bryn Mawr Office

610-525-1427

FAX: 610-525-1429

Colmar Office

215-996-0721

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