

# Making a Difference

The Newsletter of the

Autumn 2009

Domestic Violence

Resource Center

of South County

Phone: 782-3995 • Fax: 782-3999 • **24 Hour Helpline: 782-3990** • 61 Main Street, Wakefield, RI 02879

*... Hope and help for all persons in abusive relationships*



## Teens Teach Other Teens about Dating Violence

He gets in her face, yelling, screaming, breaking a pencil, making threats and calling her stupid. The on-lookers look uncomfortable but do nothing to stop it. After all, they are watching a play about dating violence, not the real thing. But the squirms and faces of many in the audience are dead give-aways that they have seen this kind of behavior before.

And no wonder. A 1995 Kaiser Permanente poll reported that 40% of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend. Yet 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continued to date their abuser according to a 1998 City of New York Teen Relationship Abuse Fact Sheet.

The play, *It's Not Okay...*, was written by two girls from Mount Hope High School and based on a true story. For the second

Ali Warner played Jenny and Alex Bermudez played Brad in a play about dating violence called *It's Not Okay...* Photo by Garrie Leitner

year in a row, we have asked Chariho High School volunteers to act in the play given to all the sophomore health classes.

"The four student actors really bought into the process," noted Julie Del Deo, DVRCS Community Outreach Advocate. "They ad-libbed some dialogue and added props to intensify the drama of the abusive relationship."

They also helped the sophomores process the information after the play ended, asking questions and providing answers that led to lively discussions. The students who saw the play learned more eagerly from their peers than from adults.

"Students often think that domestic violence only happens to parents," explained Julie. "We prefer to call it relationship violence. You don't have to be married, or even live together, to have an abusive relationship."

DVRCS is trying the same peer-to-peer learning tactic with younger children as well. Thanks to the Friendship Fund, we created an anti-bullying program at the Narragansett Indian's Nuweetuoon School that we hope to replicate in other elementary schools. Our staff helped fourth and fifth graders create a skit that they performed for younger students. Then the older students helped them process what they learned with team-building and anti-bullying activities that we developed.

"Abuse and accepting abuse are learned behaviors," said Megan Whelan, DVRCS Youth Education Advocate. "Often children do not know what are acceptable or unacceptable behaviors, so we try to teach them at a young age, before these behaviors become habits."

The skit depicted two students bullying a third student. One of his classmates stepped in and told the bullies that they should not behave in this fashion. He then asked the victim to join his

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# October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

## 9/24 Annual Meeting

Dunes Club, Narragansett

Keynote Speaker

Ann Burke, Founder of Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund

Community Impact Award

Susan Crohan

Candle in the Darkness Award  
The Washington Trust Company  
& People's Credit Union

Circle of Peace Award  
Chariho High School Volunteers

Survivor to Thriver Award  
Lisa Mabe



9/25 & 26 - Purple Ribbon Tote Bag Sales

BankNewport

North Kingstown & Narragansett branches

9/26 & 27 - Silent Witnesses at the Swamp Yankee Festival  
Crandall Field, Ashaway

10/1, 2 & 3 Fall Shopping Extravaganza

(see back cover for details)

Dunes Club, Narragansett

10/7 - Heart to Heart Community Conference

Crowne Plaza, Warwick

(Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

10/8 - Women's Night in Wickford

Main and Brown Streets, Wickford

10/15 - Ladies Night Out

South County Commons, South Kingstown

Date to be Announced - Silent Vigil

*For more information, please call Garrie at 782.3995.*

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friends. After class was dismissed and the students had left, one student stayed behind to tell the teacher that bullying had occurred. The actors then asked the younger students questions to process the skit. "How do you think the victim felt?" "What else could the victim have done?" "Why was this behavior wrong?"

A second activity was reading from a story called "The Torn Heart." One student held a cutout of a heart and the other students read a story about a boy who was bullied throughout the day. Each time a mean comment was said to the boy, a student tore off a piece of the heart. At the end of the story, very little of the paper heart was left intact to graphically show the younger students how hurtful words and behaviors can be to a victim. The older students asked questions about this story. "How did the victim feel?" "What could he have done differently?" "How would you have helped the boy?"

We are always trying new ways to reach different audiences. In South County, libraries are like community centers offering a variety of free programs and activities for teen and tweens as well as rooms in which Girl Scouts and home-schooled children often meet. Libraries offer literacy volunteers, computers and GED tutors. We knew that with that kind of traffic, we were sure to spread our message about healthy relationships with the added benefit of reaching people who might never approach our Main Street office for a myriad of reasons.

Staff set up healthy teen dating displays in all 13 Washington County libraries with the help of the Chariho Rotary Club and Women's Fund of Rhode Island. We offered information about healthy relationships and dating violence for both teens and their parents. Libraries reported that the displays were popular, and we had to replace materials that were quickly depleted. We received requests from some libraries to offer anti-bullying displays and workshops for younger children.

We welcome suggestions on how to reach even more students. Perhaps we could form a collaboration with your organization? Call 782.3995 and ask for our outreach or education advocate.



## TEEN DATING VIOLENCE STATISTICS

There is a crucial need for education and support regarding Teen Dating Violence in middle and high schools. In 2008, Teenage Research Unlimited conducted a survey on tween and teen dating relationships and reported the following statistics:

- ♦ One in five children between the ages of 13 and 14 say that their friends are victims of dating violence.
- ♦ Almost half of all tweens in relationships say they know friends who are verbally abused.
- ♦ Nearly 1 in 10 eleven and twelve year olds have had sex. Other reports offer the following shocking statistics:
  - ♦ 80% of teens regard verbal abuse as a serious issue for their age group.
  - ♦ Less than 25% of teens say they have discussed dating violence with their parents.
  - ♦ By the age of 18, one in four females report incidents of sexual assault.

Forty percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 report that they know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend as reported by a Kaiser Permanente poll in 1995. Yet 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser according to a City of New York Teen Relationship Abuse Fact Sheet, 1998.

## BULLYING STATISTICS

Bullying is a social, as well as an individual problem, and starts at a very young age. We reach out to elementary school children, ages 6 to 11, male and female, to try to change behaviors before they turn into habits and lifestyles.

- ♦ Surveys show that 77% of students are bullied mentally, verbally and physically.
- ♦ 8% of students miss one day of class per month for fear of bullies, or 160,000 students miss school everyday to avoid bullying.
- ♦ Studies have shown that bully victims have higher rates of suicide, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse.
- ♦ According to the latest Secret Service Safe School Initiative, almost 75 percent of students who used violent weapons at school felt bullied or threatened by others prior to the incident.
- ♦ In recent years, a new term called "bullycide" reflects the high rate of suicide by teens who cannot face the torment of constant bullying.
- ♦ If the power and control issue is not addressed in younger years, a bully may grow up to abuse his/her spouse and even his/her children.
- ♦ International studies report dramatic reductions (50 – 80%) in bullying when school-wide strategies are used.

Frank Hopkins of the Chariho Rotary Club shows off books purchased by the club with Melanie Rand, Young Adult Reference Librarian at Charlestown's Cross Mills Library, Doran Bercovici, library volunteer, and Julie Del Deo, DVRCSC Community Outreach Advocate.

# 2009 Fall Shopping Extravaganza

A fundraising benefit for the  
**Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County**

Shop a fabulous collection offered by clothing and gift vendors from across the country gathered together in a single location for your shopping pleasure. Shop for holidays gifts or indulge yourself!

**The Dunes Club**  
137 Boston Neck Road  
Narragansett, RI 02882

**Thursday, October 1**  
**Gala Preview Party, 6-8pm**  
\$50/supporter or \$100/patron  
jackets & ties required

**Friday, October 2**  
**Shopping, 10am-5pm\***

**Saturday, October 3**  
**Shopping, 10am-3pm\***



\*Shopping on these days will be open to the public. A percentage of all sales will be donated to DVR CSC.

## **Catch All Gifts**

Fine linens for bed, bath & tabletop; sleepwear & travel accessories

## **CM Designs**

Classically designed costume jewelry

## **Trillion**

A unique collection of estate and contemporary jewelry

## **Janet Egan Designs**

Chinese silk jackets & shoes

## **PatchPoint**

A colorful array of fashion & home accessories

## **Tish Bodell Hopkins**

Permanent botanicals

## **Loweco**

Whimsical polar fleece for children, women & dogs

## **The Belted Cow**

Belts, belts & more belts

## **Pomegranate Seeds**

Linens & gifts for tabletop & kitchen

## **M. Swenson Monograms**

Gifts items for home, women, men & children

**AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!**

NEWSLETTER BY  
Carrie Lettner

Visit our website  
for special event  
updates.  
We offer many  
ways to have fun  
and support our  
work to help  
victims of  
domestic violence.

**Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County**  
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