

END DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

VERA HOUSE FOUNDATION WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

MARCH 28 - APRIL 6, 2008

FACTS

The **WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN** is led by concerned men and boys who invite all members of the community – *men and women, young and old* – to pin on a ribbon and join them in raising awareness and funds to end domestic violence. This male leadership helps to acknowledge the important contributions men have made to this effort and invites others to take a role.

The Campaign supports the work of **ALTERNATIVES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** – A Vera House domestic violence education and accountability program designed to challenge the beliefs and attitudes of men who have been abusive to their female partners and/or ex-partners.

ACCORDING TO THE FBI, BATTERING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY TO WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES – HIGHER THAN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS, MUGGINGS, AND RAPES COMBINED.

- An estimated **1.3 MILLION** American women are battered each year.
- Law enforcement agencies in the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County answered a combined total of **APPROXIMATELY 15,500 DOMESTIC CALLS IN 2006**. Furthermore, **OVER 1,000 SEX OFFENSE CALLS WERE ANSWERED IN 2006**.
- 87% of battered women with children report that their **CHILDREN WITNESS THE ABUSE**.
- Onondaga County found that **25% OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN OUR COMMUNITY WERE WOMEN KILLED BY A CURRENT OR FORMER MALE PARTNER**. Traditionally this resulted in at least 3 or 4 female domestic homicide victims each year.

THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN BEGAN IN CANADA. It was created by men who wanted to make a clear public statement about abuse against women. They began the campaign in response to the tragic murders of 14 female college students. Vera House brought the campaign to Central New York in 1995.

Domestic Violence can include physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Abusive behavior can include hitting, threatening, belittling, intimidating, controlling money, and destroying property.

WEARING A WHITE RIBBON IS ONE WAY OF CHALLENGING ATTITUDES –

- It is a visible, personal statement to never support, commit, or remain silent about abuse.
- It is a way of raising awareness about domestic violence in our neighborhoods and the ways in which our community is working to end that violence.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Here are some ways to work to end relationship violence in our community before, during, and after your White Ribbon Campaign week!

- ⌘ Encourage your friends, family members, and co-workers to learn more about violence and abuse – including dating violence, rape, and sexual harassment. A good place to begin is by listening to people discuss their experiences.
- ⌘ Recognize that while men and boys in particular have been given social and cultural messages that they should be “in control,” people are not born violent. Violent behavior is learned in our society in a number of ways.
- ⌘ Support local organizations that work to stop violence.
- ⌘ Get involved in work to help create change. It may be talking with others, volunteering through your school, religious community, with Vera House, or with the Syracuse Area Domestic Violence Coalition. Change takes a coordinated community effort.
- ⌘ Challenge people when they make jokes or comments that put women or any group of people down. These comments may seem harmless, but they subtly contribute to the problem of members of that group being viewed as inferior.
- ⌘ Examine your own attitudes and behaviors as they may relate to the problem. Each of us can work to be more respectful in our relationships.

VERA HOUSE AND THE ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

- ⌘ Vera House has been working to end domestic violence in Onondaga County for more than 25 years. The agency offers emergency sheltering services for battered women and their children, an outreach and advocacy program, domestic violence education and training, and Vera House staffs and administers the Syracuse Area Domestic Violence Coalition.
- ⌘ The Alternatives Program was started in 1989 to help men and adolescents who are abusive end their violent behavior. The program is based on the beliefs that relationship violence is wrong, that everyone deserves to be respected, that no one deserves to be abused, and that people who abuse others must be held accountable. Hundreds of men participated in the Alternatives Program in 2007.