



Spotlight on domestic violence is needed year-round: Valley View



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

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Nearly 20 people per minute, on average, are physically abused by an intimate partner. That includes about one-in-three women and one-in-four men. Often, the harrowing impact of domestic violence carries from the home into the workforce and communities, affecting victims plus their neighbors, relatives and colleagues.

As awful as those statistics are, what's worse is that they're more than numbers. The figures represent individuals whose lives were turned inside out from the abuses of domestic violence, an issue that isn't talked about as it should be or often enough. During October, the issue, its victims and its serious effects were brought to light during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. A month of awareness was good. Year-round attention to the issue would be even better.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: [Five things to know about NY's domestic violence laws](#)

A CLEAR PATTERN: [Deadly domestic shooting sounds all too familiar: Editorial](#)

Often the signs of domestic violence's emotional and economic abuse are hidden from view. Even more hidden, are victims who may not yet be citizens of our country and don't believe that the right to live free from harm applies to them. Survivors are in the faces of our colleagues and neighbors; of our acquaintances and close friends. Too many of them suffer in silence and extreme fear, not knowing if it's safe to talk about. With them, millions of children live in fear in our country and beyond. For children, being exposed to domestic violence often causes mental, emotional, and social harm that can adversely affect their early development and leave them feeling isolated, vulnerable, anxious and depressed. It's

a secret they keep and a homeland war zone they navigate. Sometimes, they see themselves as giant protectors of the parent being abused, yet are terrified. Fortunately, we also know that children can be resilient and heal from even the most difficult of circumstances with the right support.

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence reports that most victims of domestic violence are women, whose abusers often are their male partners. But domestic violence strikes people of all genders, ages, ethnicities and socio-economic groups, although, most heavily to minority groups. And, while physical abuse may be what most people associate with domestic violence, it's not the only issue. Abusers use numerous ways to control or gain power over a partner, such as isolation, withholding money, intimidation, threats involving the children, along with verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as denying and blaming.

Adding to the problem are times when the abuse is ignored, minimized or tolerated and not met with appropriate consequences, leaving some abusers to feel that their behavior is both justified and acceptable, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Another issue are the obstacles many victims face in leaving their abusive partners. Fear, isolation, financial dependence, guilt and shame, emotional and physical impairment, a personal belief system, hope, cultural issues, inadequate community services and societal values all can weigh heavily on a person's ability to stay in or leave an abusive relationship.

Community members can help. Experts assert that by increasing the awareness of domestic violence and its dangerous and harmful effects, 'recognition of the issue grows, potentially leading to a rise in preventative and supportive services. As well, an April 2017 report that talks about helping young children that have experienced trauma by the National Center for Children in Poverty, states policies and supportive programs can help mitigate the harmful effects of trauma on children, including those that increase early care and education professionals' ability to provide trauma-informed care and the means to connect families with community services. Also beneficial to child victims of trauma are high-quality and stable early care and education programs, plus strong early learning supports.

This month, and every month, let's stand in solidarity with survivors of domestic violence by contributing to efforts to combat it and supporting its victims. Show our communities that domestic violence isn't tolerated here or anywhere, until together, we end this epidemic.

For more information, on domestic violence and how to get help, visit the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence at <http://opdv.ny.gov/> or call (800) 942-6906.

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