

C.A.R.E. Chronicle

FALL 2016

Blaming Domestic Violence Victims Does Not Help!

I have heard it many times as an outreach advocate for The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc. (C.A.R.E.). "Why doesn't she just leave" is the question I so frequently get asked when speaking about C.A.R.E. and the services we offer to victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and other violent crimes. The question I have never been asked is "Why does the abuser continue to batter and disrespect the victim?" There seems to be a tendency in our community culture, here in Charlotte County and across the country, to blame victims and to question their motives.

Prevention efforts to reduce domestic violence traditionally focused on how women could identify red flags in order to avoid them in their personal relationships. My colleagues believe the conversation about domestic violence needs to shift. Why not focus on why abusers do what they do? "We focus a lot of attention on the victims and what's happening for them, the reasons why they return to their abuser or the reasons why they don't leave their abuser, and it's the wrong conversation," said Angie Pye, CEO of the Domestic Abuse Council of Volusia County. "We don't have that conversation in any other crime. When any other crime is committed, we don't look at the victim and say why did you do this or why didn't you do that?"

Staying in or making a decision to return to an abusive relationship is often a decision of survival. Victims and survivors use the survival techniques at their disposal to protect themselves and their children. Don't overlook the fact that the abuser is the person the victim/survivor loves, and that they have children together. They want to preserve their family relationship or may consider religious implications of marriage. Violent episodes are often followed by periods of affection and apologies, so the victim/survivor wants to preserve the relationship. The victim often blames herself for the abuse as she is repeatedly told it is her fault by her abuser.

Because many abusers say they are remorseful after abusing the victim they may offer to go to counseling and promise never to hit the victim again, so the victim is

hopeful for the promised change in behavior. She stays because she has been isolated from friends and family, and phone calls and texts are likely monitored. Abusers are often very charming and charismatic in public, so victims/survivors fear that no one will believe their partners abuse them. All of this contributes to the abusers being able to sustain the power of violence, and so she feels she cannot leave.

Abusers maintain power and control over their families. If a victim decides to leave the abusive relationship, the abuser may threaten to seek custody of their children or to report her as an "unfit mother" to authorities, may threaten to withhold child support, to stop making house payments, escalates violence towards the victim at her workplace, or threatens retaliatory suicide. Under these conditions, would you feel comfortable leaving the person who you believe has the power to ruin your life?

Domestic violence is the cause of half of homelessness for women and children in the United States children. Leaving an abuser, and breaking the control, can be a very dangerous process. Many victims are killed by their abusive partners after leaving. Victims of domestic abuse in Charlotte County have access to confidential safety planning resources at C.A.R.E. An advocate always answers the hotline/helpline in person 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. All services are provided without charge for safety planning and screening for legal safeguards. Call 941-627-6000 or 941-475-6465 in Englewood. C.A.R.E. advocates are ready to help you or someone you care about.

Some common myths about abusive relationships that society perpetuates today:

- "I cannot get involved in a private family matter" - Domestic violence is not only a family problem; it is a crime and we are accountable for the safety of our communities
- "The abuse can't really be that serious" - rarely is domestic violence a one-time occurrence and it escalates in severity over time

see **BLAMING** on page 4

The Green Dot Program Is Rolling Along Here in Charlotte County!

If you have not had an opportunity to attend a free Bystander Training, there's still time! You can be a part of the culture change that is happening around you. C.A.R.E. is proud to present this exciting program that teaches us how to be active bystanders in our community. After attending a Bystander Training, you will be able to identify potential "red dot" scenarios (those moments in time when action is needed) and you will be prepared with the tools to turn those moments into Green Dots. Each Green Dot makes our community a safer place for everyone.

No one has to do everything, but everyone has to do something. Together, we can reduce violence and contribute to making Charlotte County the best place to live in the country.

When we each do our small part, we send two clear messages:

- That violence will NOT be tolerated, and
- That we expect everyone else to do their part as well.

For more information on the Green Dot Strategy in Charlotte County, and how you can attend a FREE training, contact Chris Hall at the Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies at (941) 639-5499.

Recent graduates of the Bystander Training share their reactions:

"I look forward to being a person who helps to change the culture."

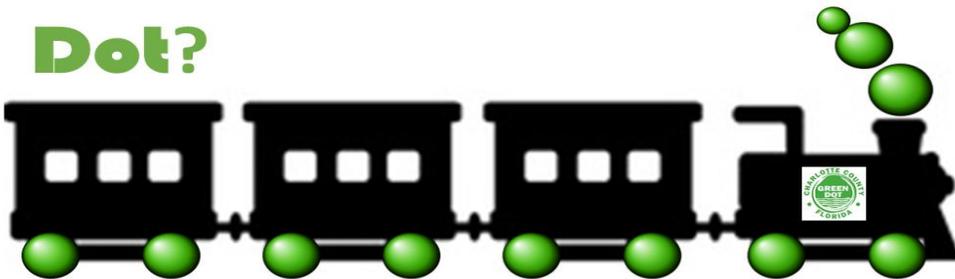
"Great program!" and "Empowering!"

"This brought tears to my eyes, in a good way."

"Thank you for what you do for our county!"

"I can step in and make a difference."

What's YOUR Green Dot?



Circle of Compassion Champion

"C.A.R.E. is very important to me because I survived a disastrous first marriage in the 70's. There was nowhere to turn, no one to talk to and no place to go. The support C.A.R.E. gives to victims of domestic and violent crime is so important and deserves support."

~ Judith Harris



Recent

**Community Action Team
Englewood**
August 2016

**Purple Pinwheels Day
Across Charlotte County**
October 23, 2016

**Domestic Violence
Awareness Month -
Take A Stand Breakfast**

Isles Yacht Club
October 25, 2016

Sonrise Baptist Church
October 26, 2017

**C.A.R.E. Auxiliary Luncheon
River City Grill**
October 27, 2016 at noon

Ongoing

ReUse Stores
www.carefl.org/reuse-stores

**Drop off household items
or look for treasures
and great bargains**

Englewood
7070 Environmental Way
Port Charlotte
16975 Kenilworth Blvd.

Upcoming

**Green Dot
Active Bystander Training**
Englewood - January 2017

**C.A.R.E. Ball 2017
Enchanted Garden**
January 28, 2017

**United
Way**



Congratulations!

First Green Dot
Active Bystander
graduates in
Charlotte County



Advocates
assembling
Hospital
Response bags
with donated
clothing and
personal
hygiene items



Reception Area - quilt made and
donated by Evening Star Quilt Guild

Building Expansion



getting ready
to start

connecting
roof sections

walls going up



Making plans to leave a gift in your will to C.A.R.E. costs nothing during your lifetime, and you maintain control of your assets. Call Linda Lusk at 941-639-5499 for more information.

BLAMING *continued*

- "The abuser just snapped or lost his/her temper" - domestic violence is the opposite of a momentary loss of temper; batterers store up anger with the intent of taking out frustration on their targets; this type of violence is actually well-managed anger
- "If it's so bad, why doesn't she just leave?" - try putting yourself in the victim's position; how do you get up and leave your relationship when you fear for yourself and your children, and you are no longer confident of making it on your own

Facts about domestic violence which is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the U.S. which is more than car accidents, muggings and rape combined:

- One in 4 women experiences domestic violence in her lifetime
- 30-60% of perpetrators of violence also abuse children in the household
- Boys witnessing domestic violence at home are twice as likely to abuse their partners/children as adults
- One in 10 domestic violence calls to police are placed by a child in the home
- The average sentence of men who kill their female partners is 2-6 years
- Women who kill their partners are sentenced, on average, for 15 years
- Women account for 85% of victims of intimate partner violence, and men for approximately 15%
- In 2016, there are about 5000 pet shelters in the U.S. with less than 2000 domestic violence shelters

So what can be done to realistically reduce domestic violence? It has been over twenty years since the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was passed. The law raised awareness about intimate partner violence, poured millions of dollars into law enforcement helping to identify incidents of abuse, to prosecute offenders and helping victims. Two decades later, incidents of reported domestic violence have fallen in most areas of the country, but there is still more to do.

1. Focus prevention efforts on stopping people from becoming abusers. Embrace role models who show how men treat women respectfully, and train boys how to show emotions positively. Parents, coaches and teachers enforcing these messages are critical.
2. Make penalties for domestic violence consistent. Encourage first-time offenders to attend intervention programs that emphasize success for being receptive to changing violent behavior.
3. Help victims/survivors to be economically dependent so they do not stay in abusive relationships so they will not be homeless and unable to support themselves and their children. Financial distributions in the court systems need to focus on economic capacity of those who are primary care-givers for their children, and which are primarily women.

Let's open our minds and not assign blame to or judge victims of violence. No one should have to get used to living in an abusive situation. If you are being abused, or someone you know or love is in a violent relationship, please call C.A.R.E. for help. We are ready to help you right now! There is hope for you and your children, your safety, and for living the life you always wanted. Call 941-627-6000 or check out www.carefl.org.

YES, I would like to help survivors of violence in Charlotte County.

You can count on my support to help families stay safe.

- \$18 provides a 20-minute crisis hotline call for a victim of sexual assault
- \$23 sponsors a survivor safety/legal services screening with a paralegal
- \$50 provides a week's supply of paper goods, laundry and cleaning supplies for the shelter
- \$90 supports private counseling services for a child victim
- \$121 provides for replacement of critical documents for a family of 4 (birth certificates, ID card)
- \$325 provides a consultation with a domestic violence attorney for injunctive representation

Other amount \$ _____ in honor of _____

For: Birthday Anniversary Other occasion _____

Your Name _____ Email address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

To make a credit card donation, please go to www.carefl.org OR

Please bill my credit card. VISA MASTERCARD DISCOVER AMERICAN EXPRESS

Name on card _____ CC# _____

Expiration Date ____/____/____ CW# _____ The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc. PO Box 510234, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0234

