

Building stronger supports for victims of domestic violence



file photo Linda Milne, Project Manager.

Domestic Violence Community Response Project
News Release

“Woman abuse is a serious social problem in our community that everyone must work to prevent”, said Linda Milne today, in announcing the formation of a Neighbours, Friends and Family campaign in the District of

Nipissing.

Over the span of one year our area police services respond to over 700 domestic violence calls involving verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse; more than 650 women and children seek safety in area shelters due to domestic violence; our local Children's Aid Society manages up to 150 open investigations involving children exposed to domestic violence; approximately 330 cases are processed through our local Domestic Violence Court Program; and about 85 abusive men attend the Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program in North Bay.

We also know that women in Canada who experience abuse are: Three times more likely than male victims of abuse to fear for their life; three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the abuse; more than twice as likely to be injured as male victims; and twice as likely to be the targets of more than 10 violent episodes (Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2005).

Based on principles of community organizing, the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign will provide our community with information and strategies to prevent woman abuse. The program offers tools and educational activities that will help the public recognize the warning signs of woman abuse, support women and other members of the community who are impacted by woman abuse, and locate supportive resources in the community.

In its 2005 Report to Ontario's Chief Coroner, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) reported that "In every case reviewed, family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers and/or professionals had some knowledge of the escalating circumstances between the perpetrators and the victims. However, these individuals did not appreciate the significance of the situation, the information or warning signs available to them or what to do about it."

Further, the DVDRC's report stated that, "domestic violence fatalities are not gender neutral events. When examining the sample of 100 cases, females were victims in 93 per cent of cases and perpetrators in only 6 per cent of the cases." The report also goes on to say that domestic homicide is both predictable and preventable.

Funded by the provincial government the Neighbours, Friends and Families program provides informational materials that teach neighbours, friends and families what they can do to prevent woman abuse. "Assisting can be as simple as providing a listening ear and helping at-risk women or abusive men link to community resources," says Milne. "However, we also want to do what we can to ensure that neighbours, friends and families stay safe by not placing themselves in a violent situation." Calling the police in an emergency or the Assaulted Women's Helpline (1-866-863-0511) or a local woman's shelters for information and guidance in less dangerous situations will help keep everyone safe.

A meeting, hosted by the Domestic Violence Community Response Project, will be held Wednesday August 8, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre. The meeting will bring together several community partners from across the Nipissing District to discuss the implementation of the Neighbours, Friends and Family Campaign in our area.

"A number of agencies and sectors will be represented at the August 8th session including representation from area police services, mental health organizations, shelters, hospitals and the church community, says Milne. "I am very excited about the interest our community is showing in this project. My hope is that the session will spark enough

interest and the commitment necessary to successfully implement and sustain the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign across the Nipissing District.”

For more information on the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign please visit
www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca.