

Women Rural Resource Centre reaching out into the business community to help end woman abuse

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Employees of area businesses are learning about domestic violence through a program called Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF).

NFF is a public education campaign, sponsored by the Ontario government, designed to raise awareness about woman abuse, teach warning signs, engage the community to work together, and provide information about local services.

Eric Magni, NFF project co-ordinator for the Women's Rural Resource Centre, has spent the past two months approaching area businesses to spread the word.

"The most effective way to get the message out is to large groups," said Mr. Magni. "Talking with larger businesses is proving very successful."

By speaking with employees, Mr. Magni can provide assistance with three levels of workshop.

"We can simply drop off pamphlets or we can make presentations anywhere from 15 minutes to 50 minutes," said Mr. Magni. "All depends on what the employee wants."

Mr. Magni has already presented six workshops and provided information to about 40 businesses.

The material includes a Power Point presentation, a movie, and then discussion.

"Research shows that domestic violence carries tremendous consequences for businesses," said Mr. Magni. "Safer and more supportive workplaces result in significant economic and social advantages to the employer."

According to Mr. Magni bringing the NFF message into the workplace was prompted by the death of nurse Lori Dupont. She was killed by an estranged boyfriend nearly three years ago, at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor.

"The coroner's inquest into the tragedy recommended that employers train their staff about the dynamics of domestic violence," said Mr. Magni.

Mr. Magni is now working closely with the Centre for Research and Education on the violence against women and children to produce a template that can be forwarded to the Ontario Women's Directorate.

"What is happening in Middlesex County should be done all across the province," said Mr. Magni. "It is surprising the level of domestic violence that still exists."

For more information contact the WRRRC at 519-246-1526. The crisis line is 1-800-265-5390.