

April is
**Sexual Assault
 Awareness Month
 and Child Abuse
 Awareness Month**

Be part of the solution –
 become informed, speak
 out, demand change!

Changing the Focus What's Wrong with this Picture?

Consider phrases that reflect sentiments that have been prevalent in the media recently, in response to a high profile incident of domestic violence in which a young man brutalized his girlfriend:

"it had to be something to provoke him ... to do it"

"the incident that sparked the fight"

the "argument" was "provoked" by something the victim did

"The victim made a foolhardy decision" to go back to him.

"Don't you do it. She's wrong."

While there were other perspectives that reflected a deeper understanding of the complexity of domestic violence, the flavor of the sentiments noted above seemed to reflect general opinion.

By the time you read this, the story may have faded from the headlines, but there will be others. And, we clearly still have a lot of work to do. We need your help, right here, right now. If you are reading this, you are likely interested in learning

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Ending Sexual Violence Means Changing Social Norms

"Women in the United States have made incredible and unprecedented gains over the past thirty years in education, the professions, business, sports, politics. The multicultural women's movement has utterly transformed the cultural landscape. But at the same time, restrictions on women's ability to move about freely are so pervasive – such a normal part of life in the post-sixties generations – that many women don't even question it. They simply order their daily lives around the threat of men's violence. ...

And men? A substantial number of us simply have no idea how profoundly some men's violence affects the lives of all the women we care about... .

Gender violence – rape, battering, sexual abuse, sexual harassment – dramatically impacts millions of individuals and families in contemporary American society. In fact, it is one of the great, ongoing tragedies of our time."

(Katz, J. (2006). *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*. Sourcebooks, Inc.)

Ten Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence

- 1). Approach gender violence as a MEN'S issue involving men of all ages and socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or possible offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.
- 2). If a brother, friend, classmate, or teammate is abusing his female partner — or is disrespectful or abusive to girls and women in general — don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so, try to talk to him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, a parent, a professor, or a counselor. **DON'T REMAIN SILENT.**
- 3). Have the courage to look inward. Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when something you do or say ends up hurting someone else. Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions might inadvertently perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.
- 4). If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help.
- 5). If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help **NOW.**
- 6). Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. Attend "Take Back the Night" rallies and other public events. Raise money for community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another student group, organize a fundraiser.
- 7). Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay-bashing. Discrimination and violence against lesbians and gays are wrong in and of themselves. This abuse also has direct links to sexism (e.g., the sexual orientation of men who speak out against sexism is often questioned, a conscious or unconscious strategy intended to silence them. This is a key reason few men do so).
- 8). Attend programs, take courses, watch films, and read articles and books about multicultural masculinities, gender inequality, and the root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.
- 9). Don't fund sexism. Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any Web site, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in a sexually degrading or abusive manner. Protest sexism in the media.
- 10). Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. Volunteer to work with gender violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs. Lead by example.

The HERO Project: A Westmoreland County Council on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention



Most perpetrators don't molest only one child if they are not reported and stopped.

Nearly 70% of child sex offenders have between 1 and 9 victims; at least 20% have 10 to 40 victims.¹

An average serial child molester may have as many as 400 victims in his lifetime.²

¹ Elliott, M., Browne, K., & Kilcoyne, J. (1995). Child sexual abuse prevention: What offenders tell us. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 5, 579-594.

² www.darknesstolight.org

Child sexual abuse is a tragic crime that is committed every day, in every social, economic, racial, ethnic and religious group in the country. It happens in cities, suburbs and rural areas. It is not, as some people think, a crime committed by a stranger. In fact, 85% of child sexual abuse cases are committed by family members, caregivers, neighbors or friends.

It usually begins with a little extra attention, what seems to others to be a special bond that is forming between this trusted adult and the child. And when it finally is disclosed that this

special relationship actually provided the opportunities for sexual abuse of the child, we say, "It can't be true." In fact, more than 2,410 cases of child sexual abuse were substantiated in Pennsylvania in 2007 according to the Department of Public Welfare's Child Abuse Annual Report. All cases involved children abused by someone they knew and depended upon, someone in a position to have frequent access to them, someone who supposedly cared for them and someone they should have been able to trust.

For the most part, it is a crime that adults can help prevent. However, adult protectors are frequently apprehensive about reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse. This is due, in part, to a fear of being wrong, as well as a lack of understanding about the signs of abuse and the appropriate means of reporting. Sometimes adults suspect child sexual abuse, but look the other way. They may feel afraid to make an accusation, or may try to convince themselves that nothing is really happening. Unfortunately, the abuse often only gets worse. If any adult suspects that a child is being sexually abused, it's far better to call and report the suspicion than to ignore it. The identity of the person making the report will be protected – and that person will be doing the right thing.

Although child sexual abuse is a national problem, the solution begins in neighborhoods and communities, one step at a time. As caring adults who interact with children on a regular basis, it is our responsibility to educate and protect our children and to report situations that we suspect are abusive. In order to communicate the problem and encourage people who suspect child sexual abuse to report it, the HERO Project Community Action Council is undertaking a community grassroots effort that will take the message to neighborhoods, schools, universities, human service agencies and businesses to ease the apprehension felt by many child protectors about reporting abuse.

To learn about child sexual abuse, supportive counseling and options for intervention, visit the HERO Project website at www.hero-project.org; or call the HERO toll-free hotline at 1-877-874-HERO. Remember, child abuse reports can be made anonymously.

If you'd like more information about becoming a part of the HERO Project Community Action Council, call Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence at 724-837-9540, ext. 114.

STEP IN, STOP ABUSE. BE A HERO TODAY.

Improving the Status of Women in Westmoreland County

In 2007, Blackburn Center joined representatives from a number of local organizations to launch an important project for our local communities: *Improving the Status of Women in Westmoreland County: A Strategic Approach*. This partnership brings together leaders from the business, education, government and not-for-profit sectors who are collectively concerned about the status of women in this community and who want to lead systemic change.

The Status of Women Project Team compiled a report based on research conducted in five key issues: poverty, the incidence of violence against women, pay equity, health and well-being, and leadership representation/opportunities. Using the information gathered through this research as a benchmark and call to action, the Project Team hosted a summit in October 2008, convening 200 community leaders from the public sector, businesses and not-for-profit organizations. The summit raised the level of participant awareness about the status of women in Westmoreland County communities and engaged participants in initial steps to prioritize the key issues for action. Over 100 participants completed "Commitment Forms" to assist with ongoing work to improve the status of women in the county.

Since the summit – and based on feedback during and after

the summit – the Project Team has chosen three priority areas for its work in 2009:

- 1). Decreasing female-headed households living in poverty. (NOTE: In 2006, 41% of female-headed households in Westmoreland County were living in poverty.)
- 2). Raising awareness about the status of women in our community.
- 3). Fostering more leadership roles for women in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors.

These three priority areas will have an impact across all five issues of concern for the Status of Women Project.

If you would like to learn more about how the Status of Women Project is interfacing with Blackburn Center's work, please contact Ann Emmerling (724-837-9540, ext. 115 or ann@blackburncenter.org). If you would like to volunteer to assist in any of the three priority areas listed above or if you have any questions about the Status of Women in Westmoreland County, please contact Bobbi Watt Geer at United Way (724-834-7170, ext. 30 or bobbie@unitedway4u.org). To see a full copy of the report, visit the United Way of Westmoreland County website at www.unitedway4u.org (select the Community Impact tab).



The MASV (Men Against Sexual Violence) Taskforce of Westmoreland County has continued its work to end violence against women and girls. Some of the accomplishments of the Taskforce over the past several months include:

- The group has developed a Role Model Program, which will have male college athletes leading student and community group presentations on ending sexual violence.
- Members of the Role Model group and other male athletes from Seton Hill University (under the direction of Chris Elliott, Head Wrestling Coach at Seton Hill University) have represented MASV in numerous activities on campus.
- Male athletes from Seton Hill University participated in a MASV Pledge Signing on the campus in February 2009.
- MASV Taskforce members conducted a workshop with more than 50 athletes from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg.
- Two male students from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg read the Jackson Katz list "10 Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence" before the performances of the *Vagina Monologues* on the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg campus in February 2009.

Changing the Focus (continued from page 1)

more about what you can do – so read on. We need you to talk to everyone you know. Chat with your friends, send e-mails, write letters, blog, twitter – anything you can do to make noise. Here are some things you can say and do:

- Battering is not *just a domestic dispute*. If I think we should paint the kitchen blue and you want yellow, that's a dispute. Fists and weapons = violence. (And by the way, if one person is beating on the other, it's not a *fight*, it's an *assault* and it's *against the law*. An *assault* involves one person attacking another. A *fight* is when several people attack each other and they all participate.)
- Stop blaming the victim. **She** is not responsible for the relationship if **he** turns out to be abusive. **She** is not a failure if **he** beats her. (And don't believe that stuff about how he had to hit her because she was *in his business* or *knows how to push his buttons*. He hit her because he wanted to hit her and he **chose** to hit her.)
- Don't be so quick to say *I told you so*, and don't ask her why she took up with him in the first place or why she stayed so long or why she went back. It is not her job to send the "right message" to others in similar situations.
- Ask the **right** question: "Why do batterers abuse their intimate partners?" (**NOT** "Why doesn't she just leave?") Battering is a chosen behavior – by the batterer – intended to intimidate one's partner and obtain power and control in the relationship. It's a learned behavior that is socially accepted and reinforced. Battering is a cultural, not psychological, problem.
- Learn more about the complex issues a battered woman faces. You can find a list of why it can be so very hard for a domestic violence victim to leave the relationship at www.blackburncenter.org. Be wary of the self-appointed "experts" out there. Becoming a media personality does not come with training in psychiatry. And training in psychiatry doesn't necessarily mean training in the dynamics of violence.

Starting the conversation and taking action will help to change the focus, and put the responsibility where it belongs: on the abuser. Until we do that, we won't see an end to this kind of violence.

Planting the seeds of promise to nurture a bouquet of hope.

For the past several years, Blackburn Center has offered a meaningful way for you to mark important occasions and to honor special people in your life.

This year's card, designed by Holly Crowther, features a birdhouse with blossoms and a quote from Aristotle, "In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous."

For each \$25 gift to Blackburn Center, we will send a card to the person you specify and will include your personal message inside the card. For any level of giving, your name and the name of the person or occasion you honor will be included in the fall edition of our newsletter, and your name will appear in Blackburn Center's Annual Report. (If you prefer, we will list you as "anonymous.") We have enclosed a remittance envelope in this newsletter for your convenience.

We hope you will consider this a way of touching the lives of thousands of people in our community as you touch the lives of those you honor. On behalf of those we serve, thank you for sharing in our mission.



In 1853, Esther Howland brought young girls into her Massachusetts home to hand-color valentines. She provided them with shelter and an opportunity to earn a livelihood. In that tradition, each specially created collector's card will be hand-colored by clients and friends of Blackburn Center.

AN EVENING OF GIVING

Monday, September 21, 2009
Garden and Civic Center, Greensburg

An abundance of exceptional hors d'oeuvres, with cocktails, to support one of our community's most urgent causes.

Una Sera del Dare

AN EVENING OF GIVING



Blackburn Center
AGAINST DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

PROCEEDS FROM THIS EVENT BENEFIT BLACKBURN CENTER AGAINST DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Call 724-837-9540 for more information

Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence is a private, not-for-profit organization that provides 24-hour hotline services, counseling, advocacy and support groups to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, incest, child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment; emergency shelter is available to survivors of domestic violence and their dependent children. Blackburn Center also provides community education, school student awareness programs, and in-service professional trainings throughout Westmoreland County.

Contact Information

Office 724-837-9540
 Fax 724-837-3676
 Hotline 724-836-1122
 Toll Free Hotline 1-888-832-2272
 Website www.blackburncenter.org

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A copy of official registration and financial information for Blackburn Center may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



United Way
 of Westmoreland County
 Donor Designation 382

CHALLENGE THE POWER. DEMAND CHANGE.

Domestic and sexual violence are rooted in an imbalance of power between men and women. Our society accepts violence against women as normal and inevitable. For Blackburn Center to fulfill its mission to end domestic and sexual violence, we must challenge this imbalance of power that supports the oppression of women.



PO Box 398
 Greensburg, PA 15601-0398

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Permit No. 648
 Greensburg, PA

NEEDS LIST Your contributions have a direct impact for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

A donation of items from the needs list throughout the year helps Blackburn Center sustain the shelter program, and helps to maintain the support groups the agency provides for women and children. In addition, some of these items are made available to women – and their children – who are establishing their own homes and need support with basic household items.

Please put the items that are in ***bold italics*** at the top of your shopping list, and help Blackburn Center manage donations by bringing new items. If you have used items to donate, the agency can provide a list of thrift shops in the area that make items available to Blackburn Center shelter residents at no cost to them.

■ KITCHEN

Aluminum foil
 Bath mats
 Can openers (hand-held)
 Coffee (regular & decaffeinated)
 Coffee creamer
 Dish drainers
 Dishpans
 Drink boxes
 Flatware
 Food items: any canned food, other non-perishables, etc.
 Food storage containers
 Kitchen garbage bags
 Packaged snacks for lunches
 Paper products:
 paper towels, napkins
 Paper towel holders
 Plastic pitchers with lids
 Plastic wrap
 Pots, pans and skillets
 Small appliances: coffee maker, can opener, knife sharpener, microwave oven
 Spices and condiments
 Tea towels and dishcloth sets
 Tall kitchen garbage cans with step-on lid openers
 Wastebaskets
 Zip-lock bags (gallon-size)

■ BATHROOM

Bath mats
 First aid and healthcare supplies
 Heating pads
 Plungers
 Shower curtains and rings
 Soap dispensers
 Toilet brushes
 Toilet paper
Towel sets
 Waste baskets

■ BEDROOM

Alarm clocks
 Bed pillows
 Bed-in-a-bag sets
 Blankets: twin & full
 Crib sheets
Nightgowns: women's one-size fits all
 Pajamas: women's one-size-fits-most & children's all sizes
 Sheet sets: twin & full
 Mattress covers (vinyl, zippered): twin & full
 Plastic hangers

■ MISCELLANEOUS

Batteries: AA and 9-volt
 Bottled water

Brooms
 Buckets
 Calendars
DVD player
 Extension cords
Fabric markers
 Fabric softener sheets
 Flashlights
 Gasoline cards
Gift cards (Wal-Mart or Target)
 Laundry detergent
 Light bulbs: 60-watt & 3-way
 Mops
 Outdoor garbage bags
 Phone cards
 Stroller (double)
 Sunscreen
 Sweat suits: all sizes
 Telephones
 Tool kits
Umbrellas
 Underpants: women's sizes

■ PERSONAL CARE

Hotel-size items are no longer needed.
 Deodorant
 Disposable razors
 Soap

PLEASE NOTE: Deliver donations to Blackburn Center's administrative offices on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 4:00 pm. Please call if you cannot bring your donation during regular business hours. We can make other arrangements if necessary.