

A fight we're in together

Domestic abuse prevention is community responsibility

The Post-Crescent

Domestic violence isn't an issue that's confined to the abused and their abusers. We all have a stake in it. And we all can do something about it.

Organizations like Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs in Appleton are devoted to combating domestic violence. But they shouldn't be working alone.

There's much that our community can and should be doing to

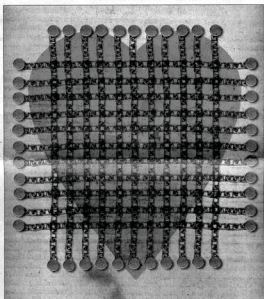
change attitudes, atmospheres — and lives.

In an interview with Beth Schnorr, Harbor House's executive director,

we discuss what each of us in the Fox Cities can do. Here's an edited transcript of the interview:



Schnorr



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE is, at its core, about power and control.

People can learn about that by contacting their local domestic abuse program and, along with that, we have to take a look at the issue of domestic violence beyond the issue of "this is happening to one family" and broaden our scope and include sexual assault in our definition of that because we're not just talking about domestic violence within one relationship. We're talking about the problem in our society of men's violence against women. Along with that, we need to expand our scope and be talking to people who are working in the areas of ending oppressions of any kind because those things play out very similarly.

Once we can get ourselves educated, we can take steps to bring our education to other places. Places like Harbor House have a lot of educational programs but we can't do all the education in a community. We train

other people to do that for us. So we go into the schools, we go into health care faith organizations. So as people get informed, they can help us by bringing that education to where they work, where they go to school, where their kids go to school.

How important is a group like the new Fox Valley Voices of Men organization in community outreach?

The Voices of Men group is one of the most hopeful things that has come along in the last 25 years. And it's prevention work, which is really what we need to do. It's about changing our society and changing our culture. That's why I say it's so hopeful, because it really does get to the root cause of it. It's going to be men who are doing more of the work. We need men to be part of this, to really be part of the solution, to not remain silent.

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On the Web

You can watch the entire interview with Beth Schnorr at www.postcrescent.com/livestream.

How to help

You can call Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs at 920-832-1667 or go to www.harborhouseonline.org.

How to get help

You can call Harbor House's crisis hot line at 920-832-1666.

dominance and sexism and power and control is still very prevalent. So we really have to inform ourselves about the scope of it and what is it before we can take steps to come together as a community to do that.

What types of things can the community do?

The first thing is to really inform yourself. On a very personal level, there are still a lot of misconceptions about what domestic violence actually is, so before we can act, people really need to get themselves informed, not just about the scope of the problem but exactly what is domestic violence.

It is a coercive pattern of tactics that are used by one person against another basically to establish power and control. It's not caused by anger, not caused by alcohol and drug abuse, not caused by extra stress or by the economy, though those things will add extra stress to a family that's already experiencing domestic violence and tend to escalate it. But it really exists because our culture allows it to exist. We still live in a sexist society and domestic violence can breed in a culture where there's male

mother. That can help motivate you to realize, "OK, I'm going to find the right words." And it can be something as simple as expressing concern, of telling people what you've noticed.

"I've noticed you seem kind of jumpy lately" or "I've noticed a bruise" or "I'm just kind of wondering if you're OK." Create an environment in which it's OK to talk about it. Identify yourself as a safe person, that you care. You don't have to know all the answers.

Three things to remember: show concern, let the victim know that you don't think this is right and it's not her fault, and what can you do to help. And one of the basic things you can do to help is refer someone to a professional.

If there someone in the community who wants to help the cause, what should they do?

They can call any of the nonprofits that are collaborating on this issue — Har-

bor House, Christine Ann Center in Oshkosh, Sexual Assault Crisis Center and Reach Counseling. We all have Web sites. We all need volunteers so that's a really easy way to do that. You can go online and fill out volunteer applications. I'd also encourage everyone to check out the Voices of Men Web site, www.voicesofmen.com.

For those who are victims of domestic abuse, what do they need to know?

That they're not alone. There are numbers to call if they want to remain anonymous. The Harbor House crisis line is 832-1666. Begin to talk to somebody about it. If you think you're in an abusive relationship, you probably are. If you want to explore that further, we can talk about that over the phone. You don't have to give us your name. You can also come in and see us. We have shelter available, counseling, legal advocacy. And we'll stand by you side by side.

SCHNORR: Community can help

From B-1

We know that most of the people who are doing the abusing are men, but we know that most men are not abusive. Most men, however, remain silent. So we need to all step up to the plate and not remain silent when we see these things happening. When men are not silent, that gradually begins to change our culture.

What should people do or say if they suspect someone they know is being abused?

The first thing I can say is, say something. I know people are reluctant to do it. First of all, know that it is your business because if your neighbor is being abused, it affects all of us. So make the determination that you're going to say something.

If you're going to approach a victim, a lot of times, what we say to people is think about it in terms of this is your sister or your