

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

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Madison? Domestic violence victim advocates throughout Wisconsin are spending this month, Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, focusing on abusive relationships among young people.

Teen dating violence, which advocates define as a pattern of destructive behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner, is increasingly recognized as a widespread problem. One in three teens in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. This rate is higher than all other forms of youth violence. Over half of teens, 57-percent, know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship.

?Teen victims often don't know where to turn,? said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). ?They many times feel adults will blame them for the abuse they have suffered. We need parents, teachers and other adults to recognize the signs of abuse and know how to support teen victims.?

Advocates say Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is also a time to increase efforts to prevent abuse in future generations. In addition to reaching out to current victims, advocates work to foster better appreciation for healthy relationships among young people.

?Each new generation brings enormous potential,? said Seger. ?With greater understanding that harmful relationship dynamics take hold during teenage years, we can now more intentionally instill values of equality and mutual respect in the next generation and thereby lower the rate of domestic violence in the future.?

One Billion Rising

During Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, a number of awareness raising events will be taking place on February 14 in connection with a global movement called ?One Billion Rising.? One Billion Rising seeks to engage people of all ages in creative demonstrations to end violence against women. Approximately 20 dances, flash mobs and other One Billion Rising events are planned across the state.

?The creative energy and spirit of One Billion Rising and the many events around the state offer wonderful opportunities to get young people involved in the movement to end violence against women and increase their knowledge of domestic and sexual violence,? said Seger.

Information about One Billion Rising and other Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month events can be found here:
<http://wcadv.org/content/resources/teen-dating-violence-prevention-and-awareness-month-2013-events>

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