



June | 2011

Spotlight On Domestic Violence



CONTACT THE
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*First Step Newsletter
A Program of
The Family Guidance Center*

THE MISSION OF FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER'S FIRST STEP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO INCREASE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

Domestic Violence and The Elderly

Usually, the first thought about elder abuse is an older adult being abused and/or neglected by a caretaker younger than the victim.

Today around the world, there is a new awareness of elder abuse and domestic violence. Domestic violence does not discriminate with age. Tens of thousands of elder victims over the age of 60 are abused, controlled, isolated, threatened, and fearful of their intimate partners; and it most likely goes unreported. Although the majority of victims are women, men can be victims too.



- have been isolated from family members and friends
- may antagonize children
- lack a sense of self-worth
- have no experience dealing with financial or legal matters
- have become resigned to a pattern of living that has gone on for decades.

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The purpose of marking World Elder Abuse Awareness

Day is to raise awareness about elder abuse; that it is not acceptable; that it takes many forms and that it is preventable.

No matter what the victim's age, abusers' tactics are remarkably similar in different aged generations. Abusers seek to have and maintain power to control where their partner goes, who they talk to, what they eat, and the finances. However, older victims face a number of difficulties that are not necessarily experienced by younger women. They include:

- grew up in an era when divorce was frowned upon
- lack the skills to seek and find gainful employment
- may have health/functional problems that restrict mobility
- serve as the caregivers to abusive partners whom they feel they cannot leave because of a sense of loyalty, their marriage vows, and family solidarity
- are being cared for by the abusive caregiver
- may split family solidarity
- have no independent source of income
- have lost family members and friends through death

Your elderly neighbor

There's an elderly neighbor you've chatted with at civic meetings and block parties for years. When you see her coming to get her mail as you walk up the street, you slow down and greet her at the mailbox. She says hello but seems wary, as if she doesn't quite recognize you. You ask her about a nasty bruise on her forearm. Oh, just an accident, she explains; the car door closed on it. She says goodbye quickly and returns to the house. Something isn't quite right about her. You think about the bruise, her skittish behavior. Well, she's getting pretty old, you think; maybe her mind is getting fuzzy. But there's something else — something isn't right.

See how you can help end domestic violence of the elderly on page 2!

Miss Jenny– My First Elderly Victim of D.V.



Years ago, I met Miss Jenny, a little petite, grey haired woman. She was 70 years old and had come to First Step for information about how to stop her husband from hurting her. “He’s a monster,” she began, “he cusses me all the time, calls me all kind of ugly names, threatens me, and hits me”. Tears streamed



down her face as she said, “some days, I just think I can’t take it any more, that’s why I’m here. How can I make him stop”? She said she was so afraid of him that she locked her bedroom door and put a chair against it every night.

I told her that we could help her obtain a Domestic Violence Protective Order and possibly have him removed from the home. “Oh no, I couldn’t do that to him”, she said, “he wouldn’t have anywhere to go”. I suggested that she go to our Shelter where she’d be safe and could think about what she wanted to do. I explained that we could help her find housing. I saw the helplessness in her eyes. She explained that she couldn’t leave her home. “I’d be giving up everything I’ve worked hard for all these 50 years and I don’t even make enough (from Social Security) to support myself.” That’s a harsh reality for many elderly victims which keep them stuck in their abusive relationship. Like Miss Jenny, their home is their only security, even if they’re not safe there. They don’t feel they can leave it and start over for an uncertain future. I suggested that she talk with an attorney to discuss her rights in terms of a property settlement. I gave her other options and talked with her about a safety plan.

I never saw Miss Jenny again, but I’ve thought of her often over the years. Deciding on whether to leave your life partner, you home and lose half of your life’s investment is a pretty daunting decision to make at 70. It’s just another example of how domestic violence robs victims of the things that’s important to them. Yes, she had some options, but none were what she wanted. After all, she just wanted him to stop hurting her.

-Ann



How to Help Older Victims of Domestic Violence?

If you suspect abuse or an older woman considers herself to be a victim of elder abuse, she has a number of options, and you can help.

- ▶ **Speak** your concern to them when the abuser is not around, and ask questions like “Are you afraid at your home?” “Is anyone hurting you?” “Do you feel safe where you live?”
- ▶ **Be supportive** and patient **Help** them recognize that no one deserves to be abused and its not a victims fault
- ▶ **Encourage** them to call or go with them to **First Step Domestic Violence Services (828) 322-1400** to receive free help, support, counseling, or a safe shelter away from her abuser
- ▶ Contact **your local Area Agency on Aging** office to identify local programs and sources of support, such as Catawba County Council on Aging 828-328-2269. These programs help elders to maintain health, well being, and independence, a good defense against abuse.
- ▶ **Educate** yourself and your community to bring awareness and prevention.

Be Changed; Get Involved

New Furniture Department at The Purple Ribbon

Yes! There is a new furniture department at The Purple Ribbon Thrift Store. Come check out the new and good conditioned furniture for a shocking deal! The Purple Ribbon is located across from the Catawba Furniture Mall on 70 S.E., Hickory; 828-322-3423



Join us at BO's family fun in Lenoir to help support the Family Guidance Center on July 22nd at 5pm-9pm. Ticket per person will cost \$10.00 for 4 hours of unlimited fun including:

Traditional or cosmic bowling

Bumper cars

Mini golf

Arcade

Laser tag

Proceeds will help benefit First Step Domestic Violence Services.

For more information please contact Liz Eller at 828-322-1400 or ljordan@fgcservices.com

Pampered Chef Corner

Last month's winner of the lunch tote was Tina Light, Congratulations!



June is a great month to host a Pampered Chef Show, especially as a fundraiser for First Step. You can help raise awareness about DV and at the same time earn some new products for yourself. One of our summer themes is "Thrill of Grillin'". This month's host special— you can pick any 3 BBQ tools for just \$21, which is an awesome deal. The guest special is even sweeter, with a purchase of \$60 (before taxes) you can choose one of our eight sauces for free. Any of the sauces go great with any of your favorite meats to grill.



Get in on the action, get your family and friends together and make a BIG difference in the lives of victims of domestic violence— host a Pampered Chef Party for First Step. For more information, call Sarah Ann Icard, your local Pampered Chef consultant.

Call or email Sarah Ann today at 828-328-2985 or sap1973@aol.com. You can also visit her website at www.pamperedchef.biz/saicard.

Not Sure What to get Dad?

Father's Day is a time to celebrate his steady hand and strong love.

This year, honor him or his mem-

ory with a gift to the Family Guidance Center to help support our many services that keep families strong. You may send to Family Guidance Center at 17 HWY 70 SE Hickory, 28602 or donate with confidence, using Pay Pal by visiting fgcservices.com and clicking on the Donate icon.

