

All of us should help end domestic violence

By Cheryl Q. Swanson
Guest opinion for the
Times-Call

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a national movement to bring public attention to the problem of relationship abuse. While October is the official month for this campaign, many individuals and organizations in Longmont make domestic violence awareness and prevention their goal every single day. Relationship abuse has serious effects on women, men and children in this community. Are you part of the solution?

More than two dozen agencies with nearly 100 people in Longmont are part of a coalition known as the Longmont Ending Violence Initiative. LEVI wants you — as a friend, relative, neighbor or co-worker — to know how to help a domestic violence victim or abuser early on and direct them to resources that can help stop the abuse.

Here is how you can help.

Educate yourself. Get the facts and find out what resources are available in the community. Visit www.LongmontDomesticViolence.org or call LEVI at 303-774-4534 for more information or to arrange a free presentation on this topic for your group.

Help a victim. Let them know you are there for them. Tell them they don't deserve to be abused and that they can live a life free of abuse. Let them know about area services that can help. Services for victims include safe shelter, counseling, social services, legal advocacy, legal aid, low-income health care and child care, protection (restraining) orders, tem-

porary safe pet housing, sexual assault resources, employment, self-sufficiency assistance and housing. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence can receive counseling, mentoring, supervised visitations and safe exchanges between parents.

Talk to an abuser. Always remember that while an abusive person may be open to talking with you, true change can

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occur only if that person is willing to be accountable for his or her actions and be willing to take the necessary steps to help himself or herself. Domestic violence certified treatment and counseling is available to abusers.

Wear a ribbon. The purple ribbon helps raise awareness for domestic violence. The white ribbon is a symbol men wear to show they want to end all violence against women. Ask others to wear a ribbon. You can pick up purple and white ribbons at the Longmont Police Department, Longmont Times-Call, Longmont Public Library and Longmont United Hospital. Ribbons are available at other locations throughout town, or you can make your own.

Distribute ribbons. Please help by distributing purple and white ribbons to others in the Longmont area, at your place of employment, at church, at your civic organization or someplace else. Call LEVI at 303-774-

4534 to arrange to pick up larger quantities of purple and/or white ribbons.

Set a good example. Other people see your behaviors and actions, especially young people. Treat others with respect, and teach the young people in your life that domestic violence is wrong.

Take a stand. Domestic violence is not a private family matter. It is not an individual issue. It is not just a women's issue. And the police cannot solve this problem alone. Every single person can and should play a role in resolving domestic violence in Longmont. Domestic violence is our problem as a community, and we all need to be involved in becoming part of the solution.

While many significant and worthy efforts have been made, domestic violence is still the No. 1 public safety issue in Longmont. Domestic violence impacts thousands of people every year in our community. More people are injured as a result of domestic violence than any other crime in our city. When residents in our community stand up and take action by making domestic violence an unacceptable behavior, it can and will become a thing of the past.

Join with us during October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and make it known where you stand on this issue. You can help. We all can.

For more information, please visit www.LongmontDomesticViolence.org or call LEVI at 303-774-4534. For emergency counseling or shelter, call Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley at 303-772-4422. In an emergency, dial 911.

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