



SHELTERING WINGS

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wish Sheltering Wings was not needed and my job was a thing of the past. Unfortunately that is not the case. Oftentimes when speaking in the community it is often said, "It's a shame we need an organization like yours, but we are thankful you are there." Recently I approached a donor about our need to expand and provide for more women and children. He was impressed with our approach, but hesitantly asked, "What you are doing is all well and good, but what are you doing to prevent domestic violence."

Each year we see an increasing number of women and children entering our doors for safety and refuge. How and when will domestic violence and sexual assault end? What is the answer? Primary prevention I believe is a key to change. The goal should be to stop any type of violence before it starts. The Centers for Disease Control recently introduced a four level social-ecological model. The various areas the model addresses are individual, relationship, community and societal factors.

Individuals should understand that personal biases or attitudes can directly affect how they relate to a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence or sexual assault. Relationships also factor in how we react to others. For example if friends are making sexual remarks or jokes about a woman or man, the way you react could be a direct result of peer pressure. How our community and society deals with this topic is a key to understanding where positive changes can be made.

Teaching our children from K-12 about what healthy relationship looks like is an important factor in primary prevention. Interestingly enough our legislators recently passed Senate Bill 316 which states in summary: Requires the department of education, in collaboration with organizations that have expertise in dating violence, domestic violence, and sexual abuse, to develop or identify model dating violence educational materials and a model for dating violence response policies and reporting. Requires the department to make the model dating violence educational materials and model for dating violence response policies developed or identified available to assist schools with the implementation of dating violence

education programs for grades 6 through 12 and dating violence response policies by July 11, 2011. As of this writing it is ready for the governor's signature. This is a small step in the right direction.

I would encourage you to log on to the CDC's website to learn more about this topic. Contact a victim advocacy program in your area to explore your protocols, policies and procedures, and ways you address violence in your community, workplace, church or home. ■

For more information please see www.cdc.gov/ncipc

Source – Dahlberg LL, Drug E.G. Violence-a global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health, Geneva, Switzerland: world Health Organization: 2002: 1-56.

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