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"NO ONE DESERVES TO BE ABUSED"

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For

KOSCIUSKO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Class of 1985 - 1986

No
Records

NO ONE DESERVES TO BE ABUSED

...To have and to hold...to love and to cherish
...For better or worse...for richer or poorer
...Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home

These statements are part of most marriage ceremonies and reflect the sentiments of the majority of the people toward marriage, home and family. Unfortunately, not all people feel this way. It is a painful fact that there is much violence within the family structure.

It is estimated that violence against wives will occur at least once in two-thirds of all marriages. Attacks by husbands on wives result in more injuries requiring medical treatment than rape, muggings and automobile accidents combined.

INDIANA STATISTICS - 1985

- 6,785 sheltered women and children in 1985
- 14% of all requests were denied because shelters were full
- 7,205 clients received non-resident counseling
- Average length of stay was 11 1/2 days
- 16% returned a second time

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY STATISTICS

July 1985 - March 30, 1986

- Residential service provided for 30 women and 49 children
- Outreach service to over 150 women
- Total bed days - 620
- 26% returned to the abuser
- 45% became independent
- 26% went to their family

- 3% undecided
- 3% returned to the shelter
- an average of 1.6 children per family

In 1980 the Altrusa Club - a club made up of business women in the Warsaw area - realized a need for a shelter for women who were being abused physically and emotionally. They learned that Fort Wayne and Elkhart were the closest cities where help was available for victims in Kosciusko County. These places were willing to help, but first they would aid the women in their own cities. This organization decided to do something about the problem in Kosciusko County and the groundwork for a facility began.

During 1981, 1982 and early 1983, survey sheets were filled out. While this was happening, Altrusans were studying methods of dealing with victims of abuse in other counties, attending workshops, visiting other facilities and reading current materials.

After all the facts had been gathered, Altrusans learned that the majority of abuse cases were in Warsaw. The agencies in Warsaw were working together, so there was an overlap of reported cases. For example, when the police received a reported case of abuse, they might turn it over to the Sheriff's department. The Sheriff's department would then report the case to the Bowen Center and the Bowen Center would also report it. Therefore, the final count for abuse cases in Kosciusko County came from the Bowen Center.

The survey showed 176 REPORTED cases of abuse during 1982 - none of them repeats as far as the Altrusa Club could see. This works out to an average of 14 abuse cases per month - 3.5 cases per week - REPORTED. The evidence pointed to the fact that violence against others is a fact! There were reported

cases of violence against the other sex, brothers/sisters, mother/son, mother/daughter, stepfather/daughter, but the highest percentage of violence was husband against wife. This was based on a report from the Warsaw Police Department.

Thanks to Altrusa, the Beaman Shelter was opened in July of 1985. The home is to be a haven for abused women and their children. The club has gained the help and support from local law enforcement agencies and has drafted bylaws and operational guidelines.

Now that the Beaman Shelter has been established, they are in need of many things to keep it going. Volunteers are needed to fill many responsibilities. When a client is in the shelter, a staff (volunteer) person must be in the home - 24 hours if necessary.

Volunteers may learn to do intakes, help man the HOTLINE, work with the children, become a listening ear for the client, answer phones and keep records. If you feel you would rather supply other talents, there are many other areas of need. Housekeeping, checking and keeping supplies, recruiting donations and other volunteers or helping with a support group, are but a few areas where there is a need.

Donations of all kinds are needed. Good clothing for women and children, soap, sample shampoos, tooth paste, razors and other toilet supplies are always in demand. Crafts and good toys for the children will be very much appreciated. Bedding, towels and wash clothes, diapers and food are some other needed items.

The need for money donations is probably the greatest necessity. The money is used in different areas. It helps to pay the director and covers the cost of utilities. Money will also be used to take care of repairs and replenish supplies when needed. Insurance is another large financial expense.

The volunteers are now organizing. They meet on a monthly basis to make sure they are being utilized to meet the needs of the shelter. It is also a time to plan for the month ahead and make sure someone will be on call if a need arises. These meetings give the volunteers an opportunity to learn about problems and how they have been handled. They know what is happening at the shelter and it makes the operations of the shelter run smoothly.

A sharing group is also in the near future. This group hopes to support the abused woman. She will be able to learn from other abused women. It will give her another place to turn to - someone she can talk to who understands what she is feeling.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or to inquire about the support group, call the Beaman Shelter.

Defining wife abuse or wife battering is not easy. The words "abused" and "battered" used here do not refer to the normal conflict and stress that occurs in all close relationships, but to the violence that can cause injury and death. Another serious aspect is that once wife beating happens, it is likely to occur over and over again, with the violence becoming worse each time.

A woman who is abused over a period of time is afraid. She is not only afraid for her own safety, but if she has children, she is concerned for them too.

Fear is probably the first and most immediate feeling during and after the beating. The abused woman will probably develop doubts about herself. She will most likely wonder if she is justified in fearing for her life and calling herself "abused". A woman who feels or thinks she is being abused, probably is.

"Why do women stay?" is a common question. Many women have learned that it may be their own feelings of shame, fear or guilt that keep them in a physically abusive relationship. It is often the social and economic pressures which compel a woman to stay. Sometimes she stays for lack of anyplace to go for shelter and advice, or she feels she loves her husband and he might change. In most cases the abuse continues. Her husband's behavior has nothing to do with her actions.

Another reason she might stay is that she feels divorce is wrong and she must keep her family together at all costs. Maybe she feels her children need a father. She may not have a job and the few friends she does have may encourage her to stay and try to work things out. A counselor, if she seeks one, might encourage her to "save the marriage". It could be a problem finding a job so that she will be able to support herself and her children. Her husband would be unable to take care of her if she has him arrested, but he may beat her more severely if she tries to leave him. Is there a way out? Sometimes it takes many years of attacks before a woman finds the courage and determination to take the steps to stop the abuse.

What can a battered woman do? First she must admit to herself that she is being abused and not being treated fairly. She has the right to be safe from physical and emotional harm, especially in her own home.

During an attack, the woman should protect herself as best she can. She should call the police to report the attack as soon as she is able to. Most importantly, she and her children should leave the house. Medical attention may be necessary, because she may have been more seriously injured than she thought. It is also a good idea to have a record of the injuries, including pictures, in case she decides to file charges.

Since there is no one cause of wife abuse, there is no easy way to prevent it. Until society rejects its tolerance and acceptance of violence for resolving conflicts and expressing anger, meaningful changes in family relationships will not occur. Prevention starts with people changing their attitudes toward violence and women. NO ONE DESERVES TO BE ABUSED or physically threatened, no matter what the excuse. It is a crime to beat anyone - a stranger, a friend or your wife - and the law should be enforced. The tolerance of family violence as a way of life in one generation encourages family violence in another generation. Since the wife abuser didn't learn to deal with anger appropriately as a child, he handles his frustrations through aggression. He needs to know that it's human to feel anger, but inhuman to release those feelings by beating others. By learning to deal with these emotions through acceptable behavior, he can gain respect for himself and others. It's another positive step towards developing mutual respect in the husband/wife relationship where each see the other as a worthy human being.

If you feel you are being abused, call the Beaman Shelter at 267-7701 to get help. Someone will be available to assist you or just talk. The shelter is there to help.

A special thanks should be said to the Altrusa Club for seeing a need and putting the wheels in motion. Also thank you to the Rotary Club for becoming the "Father" to the Beaman Shelter project.

WELL DONE ALTRUSA!!!