

October Is Also Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Submitted by **CAROL WOLFE**, founder, executive director, **Dottie's House**

Every month is dedicated to some special cause. October is dedicated to breast cancer awareness, women's health awareness, and many other worthy causes.

As founder and executive director of Dottie's House, I know of one cause that those who may be honored in October may also be personally affected by, and that is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Those of us living in the Ocean/Monmouth county area have once again recently been touched by and reminded of the horrors of domestic violence, when we learned of the brutal murder of Lisa Zindell. Lisa had done all the right things, including obtaining a restraining order. But violence cannot be stopped by a piece of paper.

Many people think that domestic violence happens to other people, people who are poor or uneducated, and that it only happens to "those people." But when you start to pay attention, you learn that there is no type, color, career, size or age that is immune to this ugly social disease.

It can only be stopped by you and me, by each of us refusing to accept behavior that is violent in any form – physical, emotional, verbal. It all has the same effect, and that is to destroy the life of the victim. It has become pervasive to the point where statistics show that our teenagers – our sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, friends and neighbors – are being abused, and most victims, including teenagers, believe it is acceptable behavior, because "he/she doesn't mean anything," or "It's because he/she loves me so much."

October will pass, and we'll focus on the causes of November. But what if the next act of violence you read about is about someone you know and love, who were so ashamed of their abuse that they hid their bruises?

It is time. Time to stop the violence, to not look away, not deny, not ignore the signs that usually start out very simply, checking your cell phone, questioning where you are, who you are with, why you didn't answer your phone, and it very often escalates into something more serious.

Women are most vulnerable between the ages of 16 to 24, and they are the ones who are most victimized. Children are the most innocent victims, and the scars they suffer from being witness to these horrible acts can take a lifetime to heal. Sometimes, they never do, and the children grow up to repeat the violence they were raised with.

Dottie's House is one of many facilities that offer housing, counseling and a host of other programs to help the survivors regain their self-esteem and learn to live a life free of violence for themselves and for their children.

We know that everyone reading this knows or suspects that someone you know has been or is now a victim. Together, if we acknowledge the violence, speak out against it and refuse to tolerate it, we can save a life and change the lives of all of our children.

CAROL WOLFE, founder, executive director, **Dottie's House**