

May Newsletter

Individuals with Disabilities - A Vulnerable Population

Special Dates

• **May 4**— Vol. mtg. 3:30— Zoom/In-person

• **May 23** - Spring Fashion Show - 2-4pm.

Current Needs

- Mouthwash
- Swiffer Wet Jet pads and liquid
- 13 gal trash bags

When we think of people with disabilities, we are aware that in general, these folks experience more barriers, and have fewer advantages in their lives than folks without disabilities. This is true for everything ranging from employment, to housing, to everyday tasks of daily living. And, as you might expect, the incidence of domestic and sexual violence is higher than for the general population, as well.



Statistics are difficult to determine, since the rate of violence depends on the category of the crime as well as the type and severity of disability, but we know that the vulnerability of people with disabilities is a huge factor in the increased rate of intimate partner and sexual violence. Some established figures state that women with disabilities have a 40% greater chance of IPV than women without disabilities, and that 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes.

Power and control is at the center of almost all IPV, so, as hard as it is to accept, this increased rate of violence makes sense. People with disabilities have unique vulnerabilities that make them more likely to experience abuse, and these forms of abuse may not always be recognized as such. Some examples are:

- Removing a person's mobility device such as a walker or wheelchair
- Preventing access to food
- Refusing to use sign language or assistive communication devices when speaking about or to the person
- Withholding or over-administering medications
- Threatening to harm service animals
- Having caretakers intentionally ignore hygiene or medical needs
- Touching an individual in an inappropriately sexual way while bathing or dressing

In addition to the vulnerabilities of people with disabilities, they also face barriers to reporting that make it difficult for them to get the help that they need; individuals often have a lack of transportation, an inability to communicate with officials, difficulty accessing community spaces, and frequently have to contend with societal attitudes about disability.

So what can we do to help survivors who have disabilities? The first thing is to always believe survivors if they report, and help them communicate in whatever way works best for them. Making a report to Adult Protective Services at DSS or to your local police department if you suspect abuse may be necessary to get help for survivors with disabilities. The advocates at Response can also help with education and support, for both survivors and their family members.

Let's remember that we all need to watch out for our most vulnerable community members.

Survivor Story

"Mary"



Our survivor story comes from Mary, an individual who has multiple disabilities; she has shared her story with Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria in the hope that her experience will help others who are being abused.

Mary and her husband met 16 years ago while she was staying in a supervised living situation designated for those with disabilities. Her husband was a driver for the agency, and they quickly fell in love and got married. They had a son early in their marriage, but her sister took custody of him before he turned two until he was twelve; he currently is living with Mary and her husband.

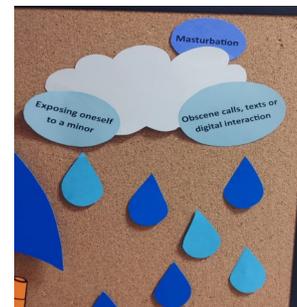
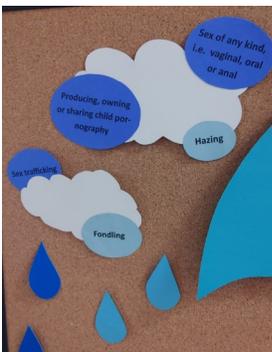
Mary's disabilities require her to rely on her husband for so many daily living activities, from getting dressed, to cooking, to communicating with others. Her husband provides transportation for Mary and their son, and makes most of the financial decisions. He has a huge amount of power in their relationship and frequently uses that to control Mary's life in an abusive way.

Some of the abuse is physical, as her husband hits her and handles her roughly if she doesn't move fast enough; there is also financial abuse, as he uses her money to pay rent and the bills, but keeps his money for himself, refusing to get Mary things she asks for; but the most damaging is the emotional abuse, as he refuses to use sign language to communicate with her, doesn't get medical help when Mary requests it, isolates her from her family, and demeans Mary to their son.

Although Mary says she loves her husband, she is not sure that she wants to stay in the marriage; but she has so many barriers to living an independent life that she feels very stuck. Luckily for Mary her one trusted caretaker has helped her talk with a disability advocate, who is working with Mary to provide some help for Mary's concerns. Mary is hoping that the situation will improve soon.

Around the Shelter

Our April bulletin board



Since we recognized April as both **Sexual Assault Awareness Month** and **Child Abuse Prevention Month**, our bulletin board focused on both topics. This is never an easy issue to address, but Sally, one of our shelter supervisors, did a good job of presenting both the offending behaviors and the preventative actions.



Recap of Events

Pinwheel Gardens



What a wonderful turnout this year for our Pinwheel for Prevention Gardens! From a sunny day in Strasburg, to a rainy day in Woodstock, to a chilly day in New Market, a big thanks to all of the community members, town officials, and law enforcement who came out to help bring awareness to Child Abuse Prevention Month.



SAAM

We recognized April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in a variety of ways this year. Did you see our display in the Shenandoah Co. Chamber window? That display focused on sexual violence in online spaces, which is a frequently overlooked form of abuse. Our social media was filled with fun collages, informational videos, and a “Where in ShenCo is SAAM?” contest. Thanks for following us on social media and for all the “likes”, comments, and shares-- that helps get our message out to the community!



Upcoming Event

Spring Fashion Show

It's less than a month away - our annual Spring Fashion Show! Join us on **Sunday, May 23rd from 2-4pm** at Ridge Runner Farms and Brewing Company for this fun event!

Familiar faces from throughout the county will be modeling fashions for all to enjoy. Light refreshments and door prizes are included in the ticket price, with beer and wine available to purchase. You'll also have the opportunity to win one of our fun raffle baskets – with themes ranging from chocolate, to wine, to a spa basket.

Ticket info: \$35/each ticket; \$100/individual sponsorship which includes two tickets; \$250/corporate sponsorship which includes four tickets. All sponsorships feature recognition in the program as well as during the event.

If you are not able to attend the event in person, we plan to have a livestream on Facebook for the highlights, as well as a fun covid-wear contest which will be featured on social media. Please visit our website at www.responseva.org/upcoming-events for tickets and more info! See you there!