

February Newsletter

Teen Dating Violence—Talk About It



February, the month of love and sweethearts, is also designated Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, or TDVAM. The theme for 2022 TDVAM is “Talk About It”; talking about it sounds like such a simple thing, but as anyone who has ever dealt with teenagers knows, this can be more challenging than it seems.

It’s true that we often shy away from difficult topics such as dating violence, suicide, mental health issues, etc., not only because they are emotional topics, but because we might not feel confident that we have the knowledge we need to address them properly. Let’s take a look at some information that can help caring adults have conversations about dating violence with the teens in their lives.

First, let’s define it. The National Institute of Justice says that teen dating violence “includes physical, psychological or sexual abuse; harassment; or stalking of any person ages 12 to 18 in the context of a past or present romantic or consensual relationship.” What the definition doesn’t include is the influence of social media and texting on teen relationships, where abusive and humiliating actions are so prevalent. So any conversation about dating violence needs to encompass each of these elements, although perhaps not all at one time! In fact, the best conversations happen over time, as opportunity presents itself; these discussions can never start too early, as we help youth navigate all types of relationships, before they even think of dating.

In order to have an understanding about abusive relationships, we need to recognize the essentials of a healthy relationship; things such as mutual respect, honesty, communication, boundaries, and consent are important topics to bring to the conversation. Modeling these elements or pointing out healthy behaviors that you see in the way others interact is a great way to help youth incorporate these expectations into their own relationships.

Some talking points might include the red flags of dating abuse such as:

- ◆ It’s not ok for someone else to control who you talk to, what you wear, or where you go.
- ◆ A partner shouldn’t refuse to use a condom or lie about birth control.
- ◆ A partner shouldn’t embarrass or belittle you in front of others.
- ◆ It’s not ok for someone to blow up your phone with texts that disrupt your life, that prevent you from studying, sleeping, visiting with friends, etc.
- ◆ A partner shouldn’t pressure you into a sexual relationship.

There is so much more to learn about this topic, so here are some excellent resources if you want to learn more:

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/talk-teens-teen-dating-violence/>
<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

Thank you for caring about our teens!

Special Dates

- **Feb 2—3:45 pm** Volunteer Mtg.
- **Feb. 8** - “Wear Orange Day”
- **Feb 1-28—** TDVAM—Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Current Needs

- Adult toothpaste
- Women’s deodorant
- Paper bowls
- Shampoo/conditioner sets
- Twin blankets

Survivor Story

Isabella Mosqueda



As a freshman in a new school, Isabella Mosqueda was struggling with some mental health challenges which she had never been able to talk about with anyone. After meeting “Rachel”, she was relieved to find someone who shared some of the same struggles and was a good listener. Their friendship grew quickly and turned into a dating relationship three months later.

As with most abusive relationships, theirs began so perfectly, with frequent talking/texting, singing and dancing together - as Isabella describes it, “like a Disney story”. “Rachel’s” controlling behavior began gradually, with her needing to know where Isabella was at all times, telling her what she should wear, and isolating her from friends and family. Isabella knew that she didn’t feel right about it, but talked herself into believing that it was because “Rachel” cared about her and wanted to keep her safe.

The physical and sexual coercion started early in their relationship, with “Rachel” insisting on kissing to make their relationship official on the first day they started dating. Soon after, Isabella was coerced into sexual acts, which left her feeling unclean and upset. The abusive relationship continued until Isabella’s parents began recognizing the signs of dating violence and insisted that she end the relationship.

Following the break-up, “Rachel” made violent threats and spread rumors about Isabella, even threatening to kill herself. It wasn’t until the relationship was completely over that Isabella realized the amount of power that “Rachel” had over her.

Today, Isabella is a senior at St. Olaf College, and has participated in events to help LGBTQ survivors know that their stories are valid. She wants to help people understand that this type of abuse can happen in same-sex relationships, and that all survivors deserve to tell their stories.

New Court Advocate

Caitlin Southers



Please join us in extending a warm welcome to our newest staff member, Caitlin Southers! She began on January 10th as our new Court & Community Collaboration Coordinator. We were sad to say goodbye to Kylie Stottlemeyer who was serving in that position for the past year, but we wish her all the best in her new endeavors. Although we miss Kylie, we are pleased that Caitlin has joined our team and look forward to the great work she will be doing with our clients, the court, and local law enforcement.

Caitlin comes to us from Rockingham Co., where she has been working in 911 and dispatch of law enforcement and fire/rescue for the past several years. She is originally from Page Co, and has also lived in Shenandoah Co., so is very familiar with our area and its needs. Caitlin and her significant other currently live in Rockingham Co with their three little girls and their pets.

Having been through a 4-year-long abusive relationship, Caitlin has a particular passion for helping others work through the incredibly complex and draining process of escaping abusive situations. She understands the various emotions that survivors experience and wants to be able to provide the support needed to help others achieve safety for themselves and their children.

We are sure that Caitlin’s professional and personal experience will help her to be an excellent resource for our clients!

Around the Shelter

Water damage

We are sad to say that this cold winter has taken a toll on our building. Our shelter experienced significant water damage after a water pipe burst during the last winter storm, making it necessary to quickly move our residents to safe emergency housing.



Our staff has been working remotely to continue our services to both in-shelter and out-of-shelter clients, and are hoping that water service is restored soon! We are coordinating closely with both our insurance agency and a restoration company to make a plan for repairs that will allow us to bring our clients back safely. A huge thank you to all who have supported us during this difficult time!



Upcoming Events

TDVAM

TDVAM– Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month - happens in February! Did you know that 1 in 3 teens experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a dating relationship before they become adults? This is a problem that we need to talk about. Coordinator will be working with the high school TAB clubs to help spread the word about healthy relationships. Look for more info on our Facebook page throughout the month. Heads up...Tuesday, Feb. 8th is orange and sharing a picture on our



Jenna, our Children and Youth Services school TAB clubs to help spread the word info on our Facebook page throughout the Wear Orange Day! Participate by wearing Facebook page!

“Moving Beyond” Support Group



Our 8-week “Moving Beyond” support group is still on for Wednesday, Feb. 9th at 6pm! Depending on the state of our building, the first session might be held virtually, or off-site, but we will know more as the start date approaches. This group is open to any survivors of sexual or domestic violence, and is a great opportunity to meet others with shared experiences.

Please help spread the word about this group, and contact Sarah at Sarahh@responseva.org to register or for more information.

Spring Fashion Show

Although it may feel like winter will never end, we know that spring is right around the corner. And with spring comes our annual fashion show! So save the date of **Sunday, May 15** from 2-4 pm—join us at **Woodstock Brewhouse** for fun, fashion, food, and more as folks from our community model their latest fashions in our spring fundraiser!

