

# SIUSLAW OUTREACH SERVICES

## SPEAKING OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*submitted by Judy Schwartz, President, SOS Board of Directors*

The month of October has been designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It's unfortunate that a month needs to be set aside to remind us that the issue of family and intimate partner violence is pervasive and is becoming a major health crisis in our society. Not only abusers and victims are affected, but children, families, elders and friends of the victim, who may also be threatened and abused.

There are complex reasons for domestic violence and here in

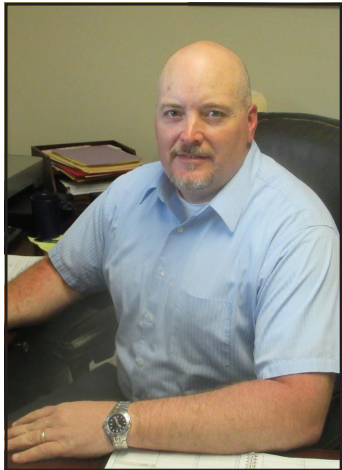
our rural community several factors play a significant part: lack of affordable housing, lack of jobs, homelessness, inability to access mental health and supportive services and a major uptick in drug use, particularly the use of methamphetamine and heroin. Stress itself is correlated with major health issues which have an impact on healthcare and community systems. Despair and stress can be triggers for drug abuse and can result in violence as well as aberrant behavior. Often, victims are drugged by their abusers to guarantee their compliance. Many homeless women, already vulnerable and devalued, become victims of violence. There has been an upsurge in sexual slavery and sexual trafficking associated with drug use and addiction. Abusers are using more sophisticated forms of harassment and surveillance, utilizing newer technologies to monitor phones and computers thus guaranteeing greater control over their victims.

How can we as a community respond? A strong and public stance needs to be made against domestic violence. Families are

the most important social unit in our communities and historically many felt that family problems should remain hidden within the family, not to be publicly aired. Many of us are in a position to speak out, to strengthen families, to have zero tolerance for any violent behavior that we observe. Our silence sends a message that violence in the family or against individuals is normal, and that it's to be expected. Damaged and broken people and families need our services and support. An important first step is to acknowledge that domestic violence is an issue needing our attention. It not only hurts those involved in its cycle but whole communities as well. During Domestic Violence Awareness Month let's begin the conversation and the work needed so that ultimately healing is possible



## IT IS ABOUT RESPECT



We have a cultural problem in the United States... the decline of civility and devaluing of human life, in other words...a lack of respect. As Executive Director of Siuslaw Outreach Services and Siuslaw School District volunteer and coach, I have noticed over the years we are losing an understanding of the word "respect." I recently asked a group of young adults and teens to define the word respect. There was a puzzled look on their faces follow by deafening silence. Finally one

young individual glibly said, "Respect means be nice and don't say anything mean or tell someone they are wrong." Our youth are being raised less by parents and more by social media and entertainment. The message being taught to our youth is you can say or do just about anything you want without consequences. If there are consequences or repercussion their reaction is often, "you don't respect me." Social media and entertainment is not the sole cause of this decline. As you look through history, social media and entertainment is somewhat reflective of what is going on in homes and schools today. Although it is not necessarily the main cause for a lack of understanding what respect means, social media and the entertainment industry often perpetuates and reinforces this unhealthy view. It is more reflective of a darker cause, that our youth are being raised in homes where domestic violence or other forms of abuse is the norm. Youth living in these environments think this is how everyone else lives. For many of their peers it is the norm. Like all forms of abuse, it is cyclical. Later in their adulthood they handle their relationships with the same level of contempt and treat their significant other as a possession rather than a partner. Youth who witness domestic violence are six times more likely to physically abuse their own children.

Some statistics from the US Census Bureau and US Department of Health to consider;

48% of children born in the United States were born to unwed mothers and fatherless homes.

46% of all marriages end in divorce. Many are forgoing marriage altogether out of fear of divorce.

The average length of marriage is 8 years.

75% of those in substance abuse treatment programs witness or experienced domestic violence.

3 million youth witness domestic violence each year.

62% of males ages 11 to 14 who witness their mother being abused were injured while trying to protect their mother.

23% of youth who attempted suicide experienced some sort of domestic violence.

1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men have reported being a victim of domestic violence. It is estimated that only half of the victims report such violence for a variety of reasons. In some cases they think it is the norm because they grew up in a home filled with violence.

The decline of the stable home is evident. I wish I could say these national statistics did not demonstrate what is going on in our quiet peaceful community but, I can't. These stats are right in line with what we are seeing in our own community. In 2017, Siuslaw Outreach responded to 299 victims of domestic violence and 13 sexual assaults. In some case, it was youth reaching out for help.

All this demonstrates nearly half our youth are being raised with a false sense of what a healthy and respectful relationship is. So let us look back at the word "RESPECT." What does that really mean? Why is it such a hard word to define and apply to our lives? I'm reminded of the lyrics of the song by the late Aretha Franklin, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me." Respect seems to

mean something different to everyone. For many, respect seems to mean, "you will agree with me and do what I say" or "you will admire me" or "let me do what I want when I want." We also seem to feel as a society that respect must be earned. Many say, "I have worked hard so, you will respect me." Some view respect at a right because of the position they hold. Thusly, the focus seems to be on themselves, how they feel and about controlling their situation. Interestingly, these are the same words and comments that abusers say to their victims.

I would like to challenge our community to consider the follow;

First define respect as a verb in the sense of communicating with civility, demonstrating patience, listening to different points of views and to learn and grow from those differences, appreciating the responsibilities and stresses of others particularly those in charge and putting the needs of others ahead of your own.

Second, to define respect as a noun in the sense that it is a gift, to be given freely and to be cherished and responsibly cared for by the recipient.

Actively demonstrate and model respect as defined above in all our relationships. Particularly for our youth.

Recognize abuse. Let others know that a home experiencing domestic violence and other forms of abuse that it is NOT the norm. That they do not have to accept and live with that. That there are those out there who care and willing to support them.

Over the past few years domestic violence has been on the rise. I firmly believe that if we as a community took this approach, so many of our societal problems, in particular domestic violence, would be far less prevalent. I ask you, "Are you willing to accept the above challenge and be part of the solution?"

**Bob Teter**  
SOS Executive Director

## No town is immune, reflections on domestic violence



When I was asked if I would contribute an article about domestic violence I was sure I could easily prepare something. And as I thought about it, going over my thirty-three years in law enforcement several ideas came to mind. I could write about various stories involving domestic violence that have stayed with me over the years, and I could relate some of the very personal issues that I think about almost every day, as a person, a father, a husband, boss, and most importantly friend.

You learn early in your police career that some of the most dangerous and most unpredictable calls involve domestic violence. That's because it is left only to the imagination what people can do to each other, physically and mentally, that would surprise most people...the real tragedy is it WOULD NOT surprise people who have been involved, sometimes in the most minor of ways, but nonetheless they would only really be shocked by your ignorance.

Police tactics will always tell you that it is very unsafe to try and deal with a violent situation by yourself. Often it has been referred to as "tombstone courage" by police trainers and coaches. I have had this drilled into me by the police departments I have worked for, the police academy, and many of the police survival seminars I have attended. But when it comes right down to it, in the middle of the night, when you are first officer at the residence of a domestic violence call, your cover officer is miles away, and you can hear sounds of a very physical altercation, often one-sided, dynamically and horrendously happening in front of you, often the tactics go out the window.

The main call that comes to mind is waiting outside of a residence, nothing special - ranch house in the valley, in a normally quiet neighborhood. I could hear lots of yelling and screaming, both from a man and a woman inside, as I am standing near the front door, waiting for my cover officer who is only two minutes away. As I'm waiting and trying to look through the window, I start to hear body impacts against the inside walls. More screaming and yelling inside as I am giving the updates on my portable radio. The front door is a decorative three panel door, the kind where all three panels are inset a bit. Suddenly a woman gets forcefully thrown through the door from the inside and lands on the front porch. I remember seeing the splintered wood and broken door pieces covering her and the outside porch area. Her husband, we later found out, comes storming out of the hole in the door to continue his attack on his wife. He had not observed me there and I was able to easily grab him and get him in handcuffs without any real problem...mostly because he was so surprised. The story is chilling but the really sad part to me, as a relatively new officer, was that the wife would only say that she fell down. She never told me she had been injured by her husband in

any way and did not want to press charges. The husband, very intoxicated, claimed he didn't know anything about what had happened. Thru the years I've seen this same scenario, to a lesser or greater extent, replay hundreds of times. Often the event is fueled by alcohol use by at least one of the people involved. Usually the male half of the fight was the aggressor but not always.

My next very memorable call involved, again, the call of a family dispute, this time at a large apartment complex. I had a cover officer with me this time and a recruit officer in training. The apartment was quiet when we arrived and ultimately we knocked on the front door. A very small slender man answered the door, in only a bathing suit, and asked what he could do for us. I noticed he was wet from head to toe; his feet were so wet he had left foot prints on the floor leading up to the front door. I advised him that we had been called to a family dispute at this location. When I began questioning him, I noticed he started slowly swaying back and forth. As he was trying to answer (he was also very intoxicated) I saw blood dripping from under his chin to the middle of his chest in big flowing drops. Two of us reached out to hold him up as he began to lose his balance. We assisted him to sit down on the sidewalk in front of his apartment door at which time we could see that his throat was slashed from ear to ear and he began to bleed heavily. Upon interviewing witnesses, we learned that the victim had been swimming with a female in the pool at the apartment complex. The man's girlfriend discovered this, went to the pool, grabbed him out of the water, broke a nearby beer bottle, and slashed his throat. According to the witness she then told the man to go back inside. In the end he survived and she went to jail. It took five officers to get her arrested and in the car.

So there are two stories...even though I think of them only on occasion, stories just like these, and often much worse happen everyday...statistically about every minute of every day in the United States. No town is immune, no matter how quaint. Every one of these incidents should alarm us, every one...but they just don't. First responders, police, fire, and ambulance, will tell you they get a regular diet of family disputes, resulting in domestic violence calls for service almost everyday. Larger populated areas will have multiple calls per day. The number of people affected by domestic violence is almost impossible to calculate; the spouse, partner, child, relative, neighbor etc. could be affected by a full range of possibilities, from intimidation to homicide.

I don't have any great answers or advice, but domestic violence cannot ever be kept a secret. Refusing to acknowledge domestic violence is a huge part of the problem. The psychological and physical issues are very complex, and people who are involved cannot deal with their problems alone. To try and give advice using phrases like "you should just leave him" or "never let him/her treat you that way", doesn't even scratch the surface.

The police often become the "protectors" who get called in middle of the night, in the middle of alcohol fueled fights and arguments. When victims just want the chaos to stop, we are the only hope that some people have to keep them safe. And once that momentary stability is established, we need support service organizations such as Florence SOS to assist that person in gaining a better life.

**Tom Turner**  
Chief, Florence Police Department



# SIUSLAW OUTREACH SERVICES

## Domestic Violence



Every officer has a story about a domestic violence call they have responded to. We are taught in the basic academy and by our field training officers that they are one of the most dangerous calls an officer has to respond to, and it only takes a couple to find out that is true. Emotions are running high, often alcohol or some other substance is involved, and a lot of the time you as the officer are seen as the enemy by everyone involved. But my biggest question as a young officer was always “Why doesn’t she just get out?”. I have responded to numerous domestic violence calls during my years with the Florence Police Department involving couples from all walks of life, types of employment and financial resources. After investigating those cases, being involved in the prosecution and attending additional trainings, I started answering my own

question of “Why doesn’t she just get out?”. It’s hard to understand the control an abuser has over the victim and the amount of time and effort they have put in to gaining that control. Fear and Love are very powerful and often times the tools used by the abuser. The fear of losing your home or being able to care for your kids to the fear of being ashamed or losing “status” makes a lot of abuse victims stay. The love they have for their family, even the abuser when he is not “angry”, makes abuse victims stay. These are just a few of the reasons why a victim might stay in an abusive relationship but having that basic understanding allowed me to see the reality behind the decision to stay. Knowing this, also allows us as the police to understand why we may not get the cooperation from a victim that we think we should. It helps explain why we may get some cooperation at the beginning, when the victim is in crisis, but how that cooperation may end when it comes time for the victim to follow through and hold the abuser accountable for what they did after the crisis is over.

I’ve asked myself if I had to leave forever right now, with kids and limited access to my finances, what would I do? My answer is always I don’t know if I could do it and that is without

all the emotional baggage that comes along with being an abuse victim. Some officers from our department are currently involved in an investigation, with all too often circumstances, of a domestic violence case. On the night of the incident the officers contacted the victim, who due to her history was not real supportive or trusting of the police. She had been viciously assaulted by her abuser and eventually confided in the officers what happened. Between the time of the incident and now that the trial date is approaching the victim and abuser have reconciled once again and are back together. The victim has changed her statement about what happened several times, to include saying the abuser wasn’t even in Florence at the time, and called department supervisors in an attempt to stop the case from moving forward, even accusing the investigating officers of harassment because they won’t stop their investigation. It would be easy for our officers to ask themselves “Why doesn’t she just get out” and not put the work in to this case that they have, but then what would the outcome be???????

**John Pitcher**  
*Commander, Florence Police Department*

In 2017 SOS served...

- 299 victims of domestic violence
- 13 victims of sexual assault
- 1,358 sheltered nights for fleeing victims
- 44 after hours from law enforcement or hospital
- 208 after hours calls to crisis hotline
- 64 participants in support group programs

### 2016 Domestic Violence Statistics

In Oregon:	139,580 victims sought help from agencies
	2,370 adults, 256 teens and 1,670 children were forced to flee due threat of physical harm or death
	37 deaths as the result of domestic violence
	Lane County has the second highest rate of domestic violence among all counties in Oregon

### The economy of domestic violence in 2017

- Women pay higher insurance rates because they are often victims of physical violence.
- 60% of victims loss jobs due to DV.
- 56% of victims loss multiple days of work to hide injuries.
- 70% of abuser who received either jail time or had to attend intervention programs lost jobs.
- Nationally, 600 fatalities in the work place due to DV.
- 63% of all business in the US report financial losses due to DV
- 8 Billion dollars in lost revenue as the direct result of domestic violence
- 8.3 Billion dollars in medical and legal services for victims of domestic violence



**October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month**  
**Come march with SOS**  
**End Domestic Violence**  
**Sunday September 30**  
**Gather by 12:45 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial on Bay Street**  
**march begins promptly at 1:00 p.m.**  
**and continues through downtown Florence**

## MARCH AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE!

**Everyone is invited!**

**JOIN US SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 12:45PM**  
**starting at Veterans Memorial in Old Town**

**Mayoral Proclamation**  
**October 8th, 5:30pm**

## How you can help SOS

- Volunteer for: Front desk reception, office assistance, clothing sorter, fundraising, or crisis line
- Join Friends of SOS: An annual donation of \$100 or more
- Support the SOS Endowment Fund
- Donate items such as: Sleeping bags, tents, shoes, blankets, clothing, coats and small household items

*For more information on how you can help or get involved, contact SOS staff at 541-997-2816.*


# OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH