



Press Release

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DOVE Center invites community to support Domestic Violence Awareness Month

ST. GEORGE -- Think of three women in your life. Now imagine that one of them has experienced domestic violence in her life.

As part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Washington County Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) -- a team consisting of victim service providers, elected officials, law enforcement and advocates -- chose to honor these survivors and those the community has lost to domestic violence during its annual candlelight vigil Wednesday night.

As everyone gathered for the vigil, statistics surrounding domestic violence were brought to light. While these statistics can be hard to digest, it's important to understand them and let people know that domestic violence is happening in the southern Utah community. While it affects one in four women nationally, it's one in three women in Utah and one in seven men.

"This is not a women's issue," DOVE Center board member Shonie Christensen said. "This is an everybody issue."

As of July, 12 domestic violence related fatalities have been reported in Utah. It is CCRT and DOVE's goal to always have zero fatalities. In addition, there have been 565 domestic violence arrests in Washington County so far this year.

"That's so many," Christensen said. "We have to do better."

While a survivor usually attends the vigil to share their story, this year was different. In order to remain anonymous due to the difficulty of breaking the silence, Christensen read a powerful story from a local survivor.

Although there is always more work to be done, DOVE and CCRT recognized those who have stepped up their efforts to combat domestic violence -- such as local law enforcement and legislative representatives.

To thank these individuals, CCRT honored and gifted plaques to Police Chief Blair Barfuss, of Dixie State University; Hildale Police Chief Robb Radley; St. George Police Chief Richard Farnsworth; LaVerkin Police Chief Benjamin Lee; Santa Clara-Ivins Police Chief Robert Flowers; Springdale Police Chief Garen Brecke; Washington City Police Chief Jason Williams; and Washington County Sheriff Cory Pulsipher.

Besides law enforcement, southern Utah Representative V. Lowry Snow was recognized for his efforts in Utah's last legislative session to make communication between a victim and a victim's advocate confidential; and for creating the Sexual Violence Protective Act, which allows any victim of sexual violence to be eligible for a protective order.

"Thanks to Representative Snow's leadership, both laws passed the house and the senate," said Washington County Attorney Brock Belnap.

During the vigil, Lunatic Fringe, a local hair salon, was recognized and received a community partner award; and Cherish Families -- an organization that provides services to underserved families -- was awarded as an innovative service provider.

St. George Mayor Jon Pike was also recognized as being the first mayor in Washington County to read a proclamation dedicating October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This year, more communities than ever before joined with DOVE to increase domestic violence awareness with a city proclamation. Participating communities are St. George, Ivins, Springdale, Hildale, Santa Clara, Washington, Hurricane and Kanab.

Domestic violence comes in many forms: physical, mental, financial and much more. However, DOVE Center wants to offer hope through its many services. In the last fiscal year, DOVE received more than 1,300 hotline calls, served more than 800 survivors in person and provided safe refuge in shelter to 250 survivors, which includes 97 children.

"There is a woman in your life that needs you," Christensen shared, "and she needs everyone in our community to stand together and be a part of her team."

During the month of October, DOVE is encouraging community members to take action in support of survivors by making a donation or creating a Facebook fundraiser benefiting DOVE. To donate, visit dovecenter.org; to set up a fundraiser, go to facebook.com/fund/dovecenter.

If you are experiencing any form of domestic violence, call DOVE Center's 24-hour helpline at (435) 628-0458 to speak with an advocate, or visit dovecenter.org to learn more. All services are free, confidential, and inclusive.

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Note to the editor: DOVE Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to empower those impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence.