

PROJECT AGAINST VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS

Advocacy Services for Individuals Affected by Domestic and Sexual Violence

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PAVE MAKES THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND FAMILY ABUSE

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We at PAVE would like to draw your attention to the connection between animal abuse and family violence. Most often, the emotional bond between family members and their pets is a source of comfort. But this bond can be used as a weapon when family violence is involved. The mysterious disappearance of the family dog, unexplained injury to the family cat, or the intended taunting (torture) of a family pet in front of family members may be the result of an abuser trying to teach a lesson: "This or worse will happen to you if you do not do as I say." Animal abuse is not just another part of family violence. It is a warning!

Often, animal abuse is a precursor to human violence, and a predictor of the potential risk of child abuse. Threatening to harm or kill a pet is a tactic used by some abusers to silence a child or coerce him or her to "do as I say." This is psychological warfare, and children can break and become damaged. In confusion, anger, or aggression, children witnessing abuse on others or experiencing abuse directly may take out their feelings on a pet, imitating or play acting the "adult" behaviors of the batterer who lashes out at someone who "misbehaves."

Leaving a family pet behind to suffer is often a barrier to getting out of an abusive situation. Unfortunately, domestic violence shelters often do not have the capacity to house pets or pay for boarding them. However, strides have been made in Vermont to try to protect pets from an abuser by including provisions for their safety in the Complaint for Relief From Abuse.

As part of our Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign, we invite you to join us on October 27th, from 10 to 1, at the Farmers' Market during Fallapalooza in downtown Bennington. We will have children's activities and giveaways. Help us raise awareness of this animal/human connection and ensure that all family members and pets are safe.