



BEHIND THE SCENES

PROJECT AGAINST VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS

Bennington County Domestic And Sexual Violence Services

December 2007 — Nancy Feinberg, Editor

THE QUESTION

Joan M. Sakalas, Ph.D., Executive Director

WELL, WHAT DID YOU DO TO PROVOKE HIM? I am astounded that victims are still asked this question.

Most often the question is asked in the context of a woman who wants to fill out a Relief From Abuse Order. It might be posed by a family member, the police or a court official. In every case it is INAPPROPRIATE!

Picture this scenario –

Your mother walks outside to the mailbox and finds her neighbor leafing through her mail. She is outraged and says, “What do you think you’re doing? That’s my mail.” The neighbor turns, shoves and slaps your mother, and tells her that, “she’d better not say any more or he’ll really hurt her.” She runs inside and tells you about the exchange.

Can you picture yourself saying, “Well, what did you do to provoke

him?”

Several things puzzle me about this situation.

- First, why are we willing to sanction violence or cruel verbal behavior in “intimate relationships” or “families” when we would not tolerate it with neighbors or strangers?
- Secondly, what does this tolerance of violence suggest about our notion of love? Do we really think that it’s all right to hurt the people we claim we love or care about?

As a community, as a society do we think it’s healthy to “wink” at some violence while we condemn other violent behavior?

Frankly, when I hear a batterer whine that, “She knew she shouldn’t say that to me,” what comes to my mind is, “How pathetic that you couldn’t think of anything else to do except hit her.” Somewhere around pre-school children begin to learn that hitting is not an acceptable way to solve a dispute. In the face of domestic violence, shouldn’t we be

asking the batterer, “What ever made you think that you have the right to hurt anyone?”

So my message to anyone who speaks to a woman who says she has been the subject of domestic or sexual violence is – DON’T JUDGE! DON’T REVICTIMIZE THE VICTIM BY SUGGESTING THAT SHE IS AT FAULT. Let the court deal with the merits of the case or an advocate offer whatever services are needed.

While we claim that we value FAMILIES, we as a society continue to sanction family and intimate violence while we condemn violence against strangers. This inconsistency is obvious. Anyone who has grown up in a family where violence was used to control behavior knows that it is the ULTIMATE CONTRADICTION. These are people who say they love you but they also hurt you.

We can do better than this and we must do better than this or we will have to admit that love is very dangerous in families and in our community. □

Volunteer...
Give the Gift of Time

Domestic and Sexual Violence is felt everywhere in the community—in our backyards, school districts, places of employment, shopping centers. In fact, it seems that increasingly severe acts of violence confront us daily. Everyone has a stake in ending the violence and in creating a socially and economically vital community. We can choose to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Volunteering for the PAVE hotline is a start. The hotline is our connection to individuals who need our services. In 2008, I would like to see PAVE broaden its volunteer base to include professionals and business people. It is a wise investment for businesses to be free from violence.

I will be scheduling a volunteer training for early January, 2008. Volunteering is not a life-long commitment, but I hope you will make some commitment. Please call to request an application at 802-442-2370.

Please start the year off right. VOLUNTEER WITH PAVE. □

24-hour Hotline: (802) 442-2111

P.O. Box 227, Bennington, VT 05201
Office: (802) 442-2370 — FAX: (802) 442-6162
Email: pave@pavebennington.com



WHAT'S THE POINT OF HAVING FAITH IN A LAW THAT IS NOT ENFORCED?

Christine Williams, Family Time Program Director

At first when I heard of the recent murder-suicide in Rupert, I responded as probably most anyone would, with shock and horror. The next day at work I heard from a co-worker that the man who first shot and killed his live-in girlfriend, and then turned the gun on himself, had had a history of perpetrating Domestic Violence. In fact he had a prior "Aggravated Domestic Assault" charge that happens to be a felony. I immediately said, "No, that couldn't be true." I heard on the news that a neighbor of his stated that he shot a gun frequently from home, out his back door. His obituary stated that he was an avid hunter. I refused to believe that he could possess a firearm—and actually use it (if it were true that he had a prior Domestic charge) **because I knew there were Federal Laws prohibiting the use of firearms by convicted felons.**

At a training I attended in 2003, I heard a U.S. Attorney describe in detail the laws regarding Domestic Violence and Interstate Custody. There are two separate federal firearms laws which relate to domestic violence. These are the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA) and the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of

1997 that amends the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968. I thought that surely this man could not have had a former record of Domestic Violence. Perhaps this was some rumor or mistake. Much to my surprise and dismay over the next couple of days I read the man's list of former criminal charges where indeed there were two convictions of domestic violence, one felony and one misdemeanor.

After some research and discussion I found out that locally an annual list is available of hunters who have shot and killed deer. Every year there are five or six felons listed among hunters' names. I've also been informed that Fish and Game along with those who sell hunting licenses do not necessarily have access to background information as to whether someone has a restraining order out on them or a prior (DV related) misdemeanor or felony, and therefore they don't report or prevent these men from hunting. Furthermore I learned that nothing is being done about this situation. No effort is being made to acquire the necessary equipment and systems to access this information, even though the Federal Laws prohibit the right to own a firearm or ammunition. Therefore, it is almost impossible to enforce the law.

How can we as a society know that someone has a history where they have proven they will use excessive, violent force on another individual, whom they probably have even claimed to have loved, yet not be concerned enough to do anything about it? This is absolutely alarming to me. How are we to protect ourselves in a community that allows violent criminals illegal access and use of firearms? I have to believe that the neighbor had no idea of the history of the man listed above.

What good is the list of charges and convictions now—after the fact? Where was this information before and why doesn't anyone have access to it? I would like to know how he was able to own a gun and brazenly and regularly shoot from his back door.

Why doesn't the public have a right to know the name of each and every person who has used excessive means and violence against another person? We need to know in order to be able to report such a person if he has a firearm. We need to know in order to hold that person accountable under the Federal Law. Again I will ask how can we have faith in the protection of a law that is so essential to safety and not have this law enforced. □

STAND UP FOR

CHILDREN *Tara Parks, Family Time Program Assistant*

During the month of July I was hired to work for PAVE's Family Time Center as the Program Assistant. Since the start of this position I have been involved in so many activities that support our program mission. In addition I have been able to attend various

conferences, co-facilitated the children's Nurturing Parenting curriculum, completed several trainings and now begun to supervise visits.

I came to PAVE after being introduced to high needs and at risk families through other human service agencies in our community and began my work in this field at Head Start where I was a teacher for three years. While at Head Start I attended courses at the Community

College of Vermont where I earned my Childhood Development Associates Credential as well as a Liberal Arts degree focused on human services and early education. After leaving Head Start I began to work part-time, at Bennington Coalition for the Homeless where I continue to offer children and their families supportive services.

Now, my work at PAVE and the

(Continued on page 4)

THIS YEAR GIVE THE GIFT OF WORDS TO HELP DECREASE VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Hilary Batchelor, Education Department



PAVE's prevention education department's favorite words for children and adults are:

Empathy – Feeling or understanding what another person is sensing, or identification with the person, sensing what it's like to be in their shoes.

Support – Person or people you can trust (besides parents) and can go to if you need advice or help.

Ally – People or peers who will help you out in the case of bullying, harassment or a risky situation.

Bystander – When there is bullying, threats, teasing or harassment, a bystander can choose to support the bully by engaging in the behavior, by watching the behavior and saying or doing nothing, or by walking away, or a bystander can choose to defend the target.

Abuse – A pattern of physical, verbal, mental, or sexual behavior used for the purpose of coercing or dominating

another person. (No one deserves abuse.)

Assertive – To stand or speak up for what you believe.

Passive – To accept or ignore a behavior or comment.

Safe/Unsafe touch – Our bodies are our own. We can say no to any touch that is uncomfortable or confusing.

Diversity – To recognize and accept others' differences.

Consent – To give permission.

Good/bad secrets – If someone asks you to keep a secret and it feels uncomfortable, talk to a support person about it (a good secret may be a surprise party).

Parts of the body – Use anatomically correct language. So if a person asks to touch a child's penis/vagina they know appropriate language, and can determine whether the touch is safe or not safe.

Harassment – Any behavior or words that are not welcome and/or continues after the person has been told to stop.

Confused – When you are mixed up or do not understand an action or words.

Uncomfortable – When a situation feels awkward or not right.

Healthy relationship – When people have an open, trustworthy, honest, truthful, caring, supportive, sincere friendship and communications are safe and heard.

Adults need to utilize these words and feelings in our vocabulary so children can understand their meanings in relationship to themselves and others.

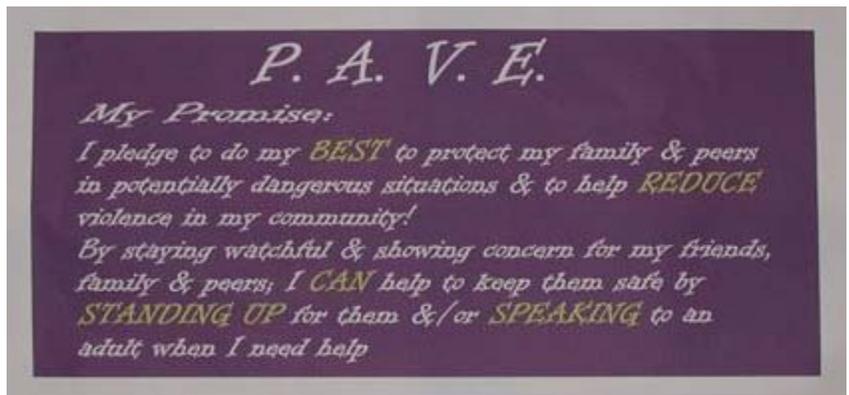
Have a safe and happy holiday season this year. □

READY TO PROTECT

As part of the Domestic Violence Awareness Month events planned by the PAVE Education Department under the supervision of Hilary Batchelor, the Career Development Center students created an oversized "Pledge To Protect" poster. Throughout the month as a continuing effort to educate themselves about healthy ways to handle conflict, bullying, and harassment issues, students from Mount Anthony High School and the Career Development Center, along with interns from Bennington and Southern Vermont College and the CDC, created special informational tables and displays to pass on their anti-violence messages. □



Volunteer Ed Toth and SVC Intern Chris staff a table to talk to men about ending violence against women.



Domestic Violence Awareness Month "Pledge to Protect"



SPREAD THE WARMTH

Debby Stanlewicz, Transitional Housing Advocate

“Mom, are we going to be able to have a turkey at Thanksgiving?” “Does Santa know where we are, and is he going to be able to find us?” “Mommy, I am really cold. My clothes don’t fit anymore.” Mom looks around and is thinking *I just put a roof over our heads, how in the world am I going to buy new clothes and holiday things for my kids? They have already had it rough moving away from everything they have known, a new place to live, new school, new friends; they deserve a nice holiday and to be warm.*

These are questions the children in our community are asking their mothers. PAVE has helped to put a roof over their heads, but it is the day-to-day things that are important to the children. They were in a situation that was beyond their control and very scary. They are trying to be brave, but they may have had to leave their things behind. They didn’t have time to get winter things together. They were lucky to get out of the house

with a couple of things. They don’t understand what they did wrong to have to change everything they have known.

We need to help the children in our communities to feel safe, warm and loved. It is the little things that accomplish these emotions. There are several programs out there to help but these programs need volunteers. Volunteering our time, gifts, compassion and a smile goes a long way. Currently programs such as *Warm the Children* provide new winter clothing for children and offer assistance to keep our children warm. They not only take donations that would pay for the clothing but are looking for shoppers. These shoppers meet with the families and shop at JC Penney’s for new warm clothing. If interested, you can contact the American Red Cross Office at 442-9458.

Another program helps at Thanksgiving. In collaboration, Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales Church and Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC) give families turkey baskets. Families sign up through BROC prior to Thanksgiving. Many donations of food supplies can be given to both Sacred Heart and BROC for not only this holiday but throughout the year. BROC’s number is 447-7515.

Spirit of Sharing is a wonderful program offered by the Department for Children and Families, Economic

Service Division to help with food and presents at Christmas. They offer gifts to children 12 and under in the towns of Bennington, North Bennington, Shaftsbury, Woodford and Pownal. This program accepts needed donations, and they are also looking for volunteers to distribute food and presents. For more information, call Economic Services Division at 442-8541.

These are just three programs that are currently available. They all have deadlines and many have already gone past. However, they still need assistance. There are many families and individuals who have these needs. *Warm the Children* only provides for children between the ages of 4-14. There are children that are both younger and older who need warm clothing and boots.

All children need to feel special. Maybe this year you can reach out in a new way—by either donating your time or holding a hand. Maybe you know of a family or friend that could use some extra support. You can offer to have them over for dinner. Give an extra smile. Make a child feel safe and secure again. Isn’t that a lovely gift? Don’t we all deserve to feel that way? Think outside of the box of how you can do one thing to make a difference. Think about how you would feel if you had to leave all of your things behind. What would it take to make **you** feel better?

CHILDREN (Continued from page 2)

Family Time Center has helped raise my own awareness of the growing issues of violence witnessed by and directed towards children in our community. This new-found awareness has also caused a slight shift in my concerns for our youth. Although I always knew that children can be negatively affected by divorce or separation, domestic violence, and environmental influences, I never realized how prevalent these harmful

influences have become in Bennington County.

No child should have to suffer the consequences of adult issues or situations. However, I have also learned that positive influences in a child’s life can help overcome the negative ones; it only takes one person to make a huge difference. For many situations there may be no one clear answer. Nevertheless we must take action so that children can live in a safe and caring environment. It is essential that each of us

understand the damage caused by ignoring children’s needs. Many do not understand how serious the mistreatment of children impacts not only the children but every person in the community and every generation to follow. My hope is to make a difference in the lives of many children through the work that I do. Giving children a voice, raising awareness and educating our community is the first step towards promoting real change.

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PAVE OFFERS CREATIVE HEALING SCHOLARSHIP

PAVE is once again accepting applications for their Creative Healing Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded annually to a survivor of domestic or sexual violence to help fund an individual's creative path to healing. The Creative Healing Fund was created in 2005 from proceeds that originated from the sale of tote bags that were designed by two survivors who were involved in our program. Each time a bag was sold, the designers received a portion of the proceeds and the remaining money was designated to the Fund. The idea behind the scholarship was that the creative process helps individuals who experienced abuse heal through the arts.

Over the past two years the scholarship has grown and thanks to the efforts of PAVE Board members the monetary value of the scholarship has increased to \$500. In addition, we expanded the breadth of the scholarship to include the possibility of a course at Southern Vermont College, Bennington College or Community College of Vermont.

To apply the applicant must:

- a. Submit a confidential application to PAVE either in writing or by contacting a PAVE resource person.
- b. Be a survivor of domestic and/or sexual violence.
- c. Give a description of the

project or course and answer the question, "How will this scholarship make my life better?"

- d. Show financial need and complete an expense sheet.

We realize that creative healing is different for everyone. For this reason the criteria for the scholarship are liberal. We will consider any and all applications. Awards will be decided by a committee of the PAVE Board of Directors. Applications can be obtained by calling the PAVE office at 802-442-2370. All applications must be submitted to PAVE, P.O. Box 227, Bennington, VT. 05201 by January 2, 2008. □

TAKE IT PERSONALLY

Linda Campbell, Assistant Director

In 1996, when I first came to PAVE, there were four full-time staff and an AmeriCorps*Vista volunteer. My caseload during that first year was under fifty. Eleven years later, there are six full-time and two half-time staff, and over the last quarter, my caseload alone totaled 136 clients. The question that I am always asked is, "Do you think domestic violence is increasing, or is it that there is more awareness out there?"

I don't know the answer to that question. Of course education and awareness play an important role in change. Relying on increased awareness as the answer certainly makes it easier to accept the growing numbers. The danger in that thinking is that it also allows us to become complacent. We might believe that

our community is safer than it actually is.

Whether or not domestic violence is increasing, the cases of domestic violence are becoming more violent. In the last year the impact of that violence was felt throughout Bennington County.

As long as there are women killed at the hands of their partner, women and children physically and sexually assaulted and children afraid to go to school, our communities are not safe and our work is not done. When statistics still show that 1 in 4 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18 and every 9 seconds a woman is beaten in the United States, we have a lot of work to do. Laws, protocols, domestic and sexual violence agencies, advocates, services and prevention programs are all in place and yet the violence rages on. What is the missing link? What is the next

step?

I believe the missing link is men and the next step is getting a significant number of them, from every walk of life, to come forward, hold their peers accountable and become outraged at the violence in their communities. Men are affected by gender violence. They are the sons of women who have been physically and sexually abused, current husbands of rape survivors and battered women, fathers of children being harassed at school, co-workers of women whose lives are tattered by abuse and friends of the grieving family whose daughter was murdered. Men are also the role models for their sons. Isn't it in their best interest to learn that violence against women will not be tolerated?

Take it personally. What if it were your mother or daughter? □

WHAT TO DO IN THE MEANTIME?

Nancy Feinberg, Volunteer Coordinator

This article is written out of frustration at the seeming lack of change in the rate of victimization of women and girls. With the latest rash of domestic violence-related murders and suicides, the violence seems to be worsening. I was reading Michael Flood's "Deconstructing the culture of sexual assault" in which he argues that men's attitudes, beliefs and actions towards women need to change in order to end violence against women.¹ He lists key strategies that non-violent men can undertake to try to shift the power imbalance and the cultural norm. I know some men willing to speak out in support for women, but not enough....IN THE MEANTIME, what are women to do in a culture of violence?

IN THE MEANTIME, how do women travel the narrow path of a "culture of assault" to an ever-widening "culture of autonomy?" It can be a very long road, but it's one that PAVE helps people take all the time. The abuse is NOT THEIR

FAULT. Someone has violated them. Early on, women don't always recognize the abuse. It may be difficult for someone to even assert that she is being abused. Violence may be an established pattern of their childhood. In their teen years, they may experience dating violence. As part of the litany of abuse, no one has protected them from the assaults; why should they protect themselves? Their feelings of mistrust and low self-esteem are not inconsistent with having been abused. In addition, adult women don't enter a relationship knowing it is abusive. Gradually, the partner strips them of their self-worth and decision-making capabilities. Women still may not recognize it as abusive. They may make excuses for the coercion and/or violence.

However, when women connect to a support system they may learn that they have options. They may question their own, long-held belief system of established family values and low self-worth and "see" the abuse as only a condition of their circumstances, not as preordained. They "get it." They embolden themselves with supports and surround themselves with people and

activities to help empower them. They recognize positive qualities about themselves. Somehow they know that happiness does not depend on having a "partner." With a restoration of independence and deliberation of choices, women wend their way down the path to autonomy and possibly better relationships.

We want to see all girls and women grow, to be contributing members of society, ready to give back, have a positive influence on the behaviors of others, and to model healthy relationships to young people. We want them to develop a clear voice when they express their thoughts so that they can handle any consequences that may arise from stating what they think. We hope that they expect nothing less than to be treated with respect no matter whether someone disagrees or agrees with them. □

¹Flood, Michael (2003) Deconstructing the culture of sexual assault. Presentation to *Practice and Prevention: Contemporary Issues in Adult Sexual Assault in New South Wales*. Sydney: University of Technology, 12-14 February.

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- West Mt. Animal Hospital

Or call PAVE Office at
802-442-2370

Drawing February 14th, 2008

Tickets \$5 each; 3 for \$10

A portion of the proceeds will help fund PAVE's
CREATIVE HEALING SCHOLARSHIP.

*Project Against Violent Encounters
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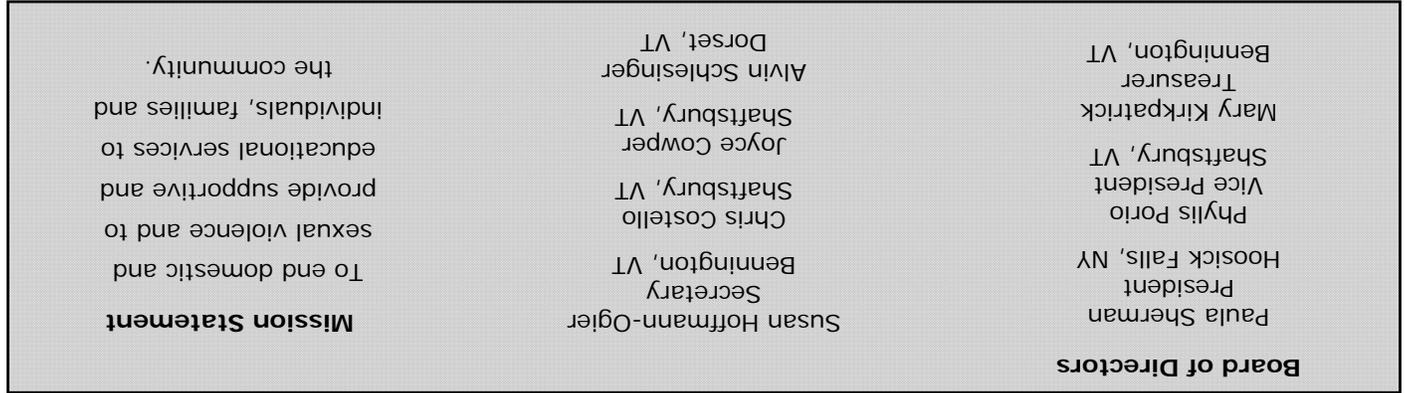
What do we live for, if it
is not to make life less
difficult for each other?
~ George Elliot

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Mission Statement
To end domestic and
sexual violence and to
provide supportive and
educational services to
individuals, families and
the community.



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Contact PAVE to discuss volunteer opportunities. Thank you. Mail to: PAVE, P.O. Box 227, Bennington VT 05201

We are grateful to the volunteers of R.S.V.P. who help assemble this newsletter.

Thank You for Your Support.

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Jonathon's Table
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Mace Security International
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Methodist Church
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Perfect Wife
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