



News Release

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SOJOURNER FAMILY PEACE CENTER AIMS TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT THE SOURCE

Agency offers unique 'beyond abuse' program geared toward full-circle treatment

MILWAUKEE (Sept. 27, 2011) – In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Sojourner Family Peace Center (SFPC) speaks out about its full-circle approach to treating domestic violence and the importance of educating both the perpetrator and the victim.

The agency's Beyond Abuse (BA) program works with men and women who have committed violent, abusive acts and/or exhibit controlling behavior in their intimate partner relationships. The program was created in 1981 to address an unmet need in the Milwaukee community, encouraging offenders to put an end to the violence. Thirty years later, its mission remains unchanged.

Removing victims from abusive situations doesn't prevent the continued cycle of violence – or protect the next partner. The SFPC BA program helps participants eliminate abusive and controlling behaviors from their relationships. Sessions encourage members to first identify and recognize what constitutes abusive behavior. An important next step is acceptance of responsibility for one's own behavior. Facilitators work to help abusers develop skills necessary to cope with their feelings, reinforcing ways to express and communicate them effectively. Members learn alternatives to abuse and begin practicing healthy ways to deal with emotions and conflict

“I now look in the mirror rather than finger-pointing,” said a recent BA program graduate. “I always had an excuse for the way I acted. It wasn’t me; it was always someone else. Now I see I was the problem.”

Participation in the program is either voluntary or ordered by the courts. Currently, there are 371 participants. Members are divided into 16 groups that run simultaneously for 23 weeks. Each group is led by trained, trauma-informed male and female co-facilitators, demonstrating shared power and modeling positive interaction.

“We know that domestic violence is rarely a one-time, isolated event,” said Angela Mancuso, co-executive director. “While response plans and ongoing support for victims is critical, it’s just as important that we are doing all we can to prevent violence at the root and help these individuals determine what kind of person they want to be.

“We recognize that deep down the majority of BA participants want to make a change – this longstanding program offers a unique opportunity to put that change into practice.”

For more information, please contact Angela Mancuso at 414-276-1911. To seek help from an abusive situation, call the 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline at 414-933-2722.

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