

FTP aiming to end cycle of violence during Women's Abuse Prevention Month

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

The month of November marks Women Abuse Prevention Month across Canada.

A staggering 67 percent of the population knows someone who has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse, according to statistics posted on the Canadian Women's Organization website. Staggeringly, 83 percent of spousal violence is against women. From 2007 to 2017 79 percent of 933 intimate partner homicides were female.

Women abuse happens, and it happens in our community. That statistics show us that half of all women in Canada have experienced some incident of physical or sexual violence since they've turned 16 is frightening. On average 20 to 30 women a year are murdered in the province of Ontario alone. Domestic violence is the second reason for calls to emergency services, says Lynette Pole-Langdon, Manager of Counselling Services and Community Education at Family Transition Place.

The Family Transition Place (FTP) provides services to women and children who are trying to escape or are recovering from unhealthy and abusive relationships.

According to their website, "Inside FTP's doors, women find a warm and welcoming place where their safety and well-being is the most important thing in the world. Whether they need a safe place to live, or the services of a professional, skilled counsellor to assist them on their journey, FTP is there to help."

Seven years ago, FTP joined the campaign that allows the community to show their support women's shelters. the organization and what they do, but also for the women and children who have suffered from domestic violence. "The Wrapped in Courage" campaign encourages people to wrap yourself in a purple scarf, tie or even a bandana for your pet, to raise awareness and funds for their services.

"We still need to do more. Our shelter is always full, we don't have enough shelter beds, we're often always turning people away, our counselling programs have waiting lists, although if someone has experienced a recent assault whether it's physical or sexual, they're never wait-listed. They get support right away from a counsellor. Our local schools are booking our Youth Education a year in advance," explains Pole-Langdon.

One of the key importance of spreading awareness is for the number of women who haven't come forward. Women and children who don't feel safe or encouraged to escape their unhealthy relationships. 70% of spousal violence is not reported to the police.

Not only do they hold services for women and children, but they provide service for fathers as well.

"As much as we're doing everything that we can to support women in our community, we actually have a Caring Dad's program facilitated in partnership with Dufferin Child and Family Services, to support Dads who want to change their behaviors," says Pole-Langdon.

Last year the Family Transition Place provided women abuse counselling to 343 women, sexual abuse counselling to 149 women and 17 men and had 73 women and 45 children in emergency shelter. 3,261 calls went through to their support line and 324 women and one man received Transitional Support Services.

FTP provides Youth Education programs as well to teach children from a young age on what a healthy relationship looks like. Their Youth Education Program began in 2001 and has provided information and education to over 50,000 students and over 40 schools. These programs are mainly funded on fundraisers and donations.

Nov 25 is the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women, but a day that strikes vital for remembrance for the team at Family Transition Place is actually Dec 6, which is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This day is in remembrance of the 1989 Ecole Polytechnique Tragedy, also known as the Montreal Massacre, where 14 young women were murdered because of their gender.

?We recognize the whole month of November, but then specifically in terms of days we often hold a vigil on Dec 6, but this year the format is going to be a little different. We're going to hold an event that we're hoping community members come to, that is really more about sparking conversation and looking at how we can all take action,? states Pole-Langdon.

She added, ?The statistics are impactful and important, but I want people to know that they can always call us for service and we're going to be here for them. As much as counselling might have a wait list, we'll bypass the wait list if someone needs immediate support.?

The Family Transition Place has a shelter in Orangeville and satellite offices in Bolton and in Shelburne, and they have received five-year status of women grant to broaden their Shelburne location to provide more support for women and their families living rurally in North Dufferin.

For more information about Women Abuse Prevention Month or services provided from the Family Transition Place please visit familytransitionplace.ca