Improving Cupid’s Aim

Building Healthy Relationships for 2010

February is the perfect month to focus on building healthy relationships. Love is in the air as people exchange “be my valentine” wishes with cards, poems, and simple gifts such as candy or flowers.

Cupid is the most famous of Valentine symbols. He is known as a mischievous, winged child armed with bow and arrows. The arrows signify desires and emotions of love, and Cupid aims those arrows at Gods and Humans, causing them to fall deeply in love. Cupid has always played a role in the celebrations of love and lovers. In ancient Greece he was known as Eros, the young son of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. To the Romans he was Cupid, and his mother was Venus.

In matters of the heart, we mortals do not always make the best choices. The “desires and emotions” of love often blind us to the reality of our situation in a new relationship. Victims fail to recognize the signs that their partner may be leading them down a path to domestic violence.

Domestic violence is all about power and control over the victim. Gradually, the victim is stripped of family visits, friends and life’s simple privileges such as cell phones, spending money and freedom to choose activities. By the time reality sets in, the victim is isolated and lacks the confidence, self esteem and financial means to leave the abuser. They have been hiding behind a veil of silence and they feel trapped and alone. Victims often suffer in silence for years before they find the strength to seek help at social service agencies such as The Women’s Center that can provide safe plans, shelter, counseling, advocacy and the financial support to regain control over their life and break the cycle of violence for their children.

Relationship violence is the number one cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 to 44; more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined. According to Jane Doe Inc., 1 in 5 girls will experience some form of dating violence. While men and boys are also victims of violence and abuse, 91% are women compared to 9% male and 77% of completed rapes are committed by someone who is known to the victim.

Educating Youth

Healthy Relationships are a learned behavior. The Women’s Center has made educating our youth about dating violence a priority for 2010. By introducing an effective research-based, national curriculum called “Safe Dates” into local schools, we can help prevent domestic violence by teaching male and female students how to recognize the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship. They learn that healthy relationships are about equality, pursuing different interests, and supporting separate goals. The Women’s Center offers “equality” cards for Valentine’s Day free of charge to schools that students can exchange with the message “Valentine, don’t just be mine … be yours, too! “ The sender vows to support their Valentine to pursue dreams, listen to them and treat them as an equal. These cards help build awareness that relationships should be built on “equality”, not jealousy and control.

The White Ribbon Campaign

This year marks the 3rd Annual statewide White Ribbon Day Campaign in Massachusetts. White Ribbon Day has been moved to March 2, 2010 to coincide with Women’s History Month. The White Ribbon campaign asks men to wear a white ribbon to celebrate the women and girls in their lives, celebrate positive masculinity, and pledge to be part of the solution to end violence against women.
By inviting men to be part of the solution, The Women’s Center is working to end relationship violence and break the cycle of domestic violence in our communities. The Women’s Center introduced the White Ribbon Campaign to the Southcoast in 2009. Students in the Peaceful Coalition at Durfee High School, UMASS Dartmouth, and others have joined the campaign and signed the pledge to end violence against women. During February and March, TWC will encourage community organizations to collaborate and implement campaigns in the 13 communities we serve.

Cupid will be on the prowl soon, aiming his trusty bow and arrow at unsuspecting lovers who will fall hopelessly in love. Don’t let blind love mask the reality that may be lurking in the shadows. Learn the warning signs and you will improve Cupid’s aim and find a healthy relationship for 2010.

For more information about domestic violence or how you can get involved in the White Ribbon campaign locally, visit www.thewomenscentersc.com or call The Women’s Center at 508-996-3343. If you need help or know someone who does, call the 24-Hour Hotline at 508-999-6636.