
Amanda Cochrane

Why Domestic Violence Awareness Month?

Are you tired of the ribbons devoted to raising awareness for one issue or another? Over time, some of the awareness months lose their sense of urgency as people get used to seeing them and only minimally think about the issue a certain color is trying to highlight.

But what awareness months allow us to do is put a spotlight on something that affects us all – one way or another. It provides us the opportunity to reflect on and hopefully act on an injustice of some kind – it is a rallying cry for those among us whose voices cannot always be heard.

I don't think a week goes by

that I look in this paper and don't see a story about domestic violence. Whether it is a story about the case involving the murder of Thea Collier Swartz or if it is about the NH state senator being

accused of domestic violence. It may be a story at the back of the paper that details an account of abuse reported to the police. Start noticing the stories. These stories are only a small fraction of the domestic violence that happens in the NEK.

The suffering people endure



at the hands of an abusive partner isn't always evident. You might not be aware that your co-worker's partner only puts enough gas in her car that she needs to get to work and nothing more to make sure she doesn't go anywhere else; you might not see the bruises that your friend at book club has under her top because her partner hurts her where no one else can see; you may not understand that your neighbor puts up with their screaming and demeaning spouse because other-

wise their children will not have a safe place to live or a way to get to school.

Throughout this month Umbrella will be suggesting ways our community can support those in our neighborhoods and beyond who are currently living within abusive relationships. We will also be looking at root causes of domestic violence and what Umbrella is doing to address them. We are doing that to raise awareness, yes – but more than that – we hope to inspire action. Awareness + Action = Social Change.

Amanda Cochrane is the executive director of Umbrella.