OCTOBER: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

NO MORE VIOLENCE

ADOBE STOCK

Domestic violence affects us all, a whole community approach is necessary

By Amanda Pump

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a time to renew our commitment to alleviating this pervasive issue that destroys families and tears at the fabric of our community. Despite continuous efforts, a 2024 report from the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence revealed a stark reality: domestic violence (DV) is still highly prevalent, with 18% of Hawaii adults experiencing physical violence or intimidation by an intimate partner in the past five years. Seeing the numbers in black and white is a reminder of the work that lies ahead.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated domestic violence in our state, and now we must focus on the broader socioeconomic factors at play. Inflation has increased financial hardships, trapping many individuals in abusive situations as they struggle to meet basic needs. Child & Family Service (CFS) witnessed firsthand how these economic pressures make it harder for survivors to leave their abusers and achieve financial independence.

ISLAND VOICES

Amanda Pump is president/CEO of Child & Family Service.

CFS approaches these challenges in the pandemic's aftermath with innovative practices that address the unique needs of DV survivors. Among our many initiatives, Transition to Success (TTS) stands out as a model designed to target and treat the whole family by strengthening their social determinants of health. These include factors such as housing, mental health, parenting, child care, financial stability and food security. By wrapping a family into services that enhance these core areas, it supports both the individual and family unit, decreasing the likelihood abuse will reoccur.

In addition, the Ka La Hiki Ola program provides comprehensive support for the survivor of DV and the parent-child relationship. The program shows measurable success in facilitating recovery from psychological impacts of abuse and healing family

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GET HELP GETTING OUT

Visit childandfamilyservice.org for a list of hotlines and programs for domestic abuse survivors. The shelters are open 24 hours a day for those seeking a safe space. Child & Family Service and others offer the following domestic violence hotlines, as well:

>> **Oahu:** (808) 841-0822
>> **West Hawaii island:** (808) 322-7233
>> **East Hawaii island:** (808) 959-8864
>> **Kauai:** (808) 245-6362, operated by the YWCA Crisis Hotline
>> **Maui:** (808) 579-9581, operated by Women Helping Women
>> **Molokai:** (808) 567-6888, operated by Moloka'i Community Service Council

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION CENTER (DVAC):

>> **Oahu helpline:** (808) 531-3771
>> **Toll-free helpline:** (800) 690-6200
>> **Texting line:** (605) 956 5680

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE:

>> National helpline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233); or online at www.thehotline.org

Annual Men's March Against Violence a chance to show support, learn

By Monique Ibarra

The last 12 months have been the deadliest for domestic violence in Hawaii in many, many years. Most recently, there were two domestic violence incidents involving the military community and an Ewa man arrested for attempted murder for allegedly stabbing a woman after a domestic argument.

ISLAND VOICES

Monique Ibarra is executive director of the Domestic Violence Action Center.

Looking beyond Oahu and the United States, Olympic long-distance runner Rebecca Cheptegei died earlier this month after her partner doused her with gasoline and set her on fire.

It is truly heartbreaking.

There has never been a greater need to remind our community that everyone must play a role in stopping domestic violence. This is why we support the march.

On Oct. 3, this Thursday, the Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC) hosts its 30th Annual Men's March Against Violence on Oahu.

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STAR-ADVERTISER / 2018

The Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC) will host its 30th Annual Men's March Against Violence on Oahu on Thursday. Participants in the 2018 march leave the state Capitol and head downtown.

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bonds. There were statistically significant improvements in symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder, such as depression, anxiety and disassociation, for caregivers and their children. Further, conflict between children and caregivers decreased notably. We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to change; therefore, we also serve abusers in a non-judgmental way, providing the tools needed to right the harm and move forward. Targeted, compassionate interventions have shown a profound impact on the lives of those impacted by DV.

Our House of Hope: Pet Place, funded through a grant from the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW), was established to ensure DV treatment is inclusive. This initiative allows survivors to bring their beloved pets to shelters, which addresses a critical barrier for those seeking help. Abusers often harm pets as a means of control, or survivors are reluctant to leave abusive situations because they cannot bring their pets with them. Through partnerships with the Hawaiian Humane Society, behavioral management for pets and forensic evaluations are provided, ensuring that both survivors and their companions can find safety and support. Our efforts extend beyond individual programs. CFS has developed and coordinated entry systems to streamline services across Oahu, making it easier for survivors to access the help they need.

Despite these incredible strides, the success of programs hinges on adequate funding. For the past 15 years, funding for DV programs has plateaued, leaving organizations like ours operating at a deficit. CFS employees, who are dedicated to serving the community, often earn below a living wage. This lack of financial support is even more pronounced on neighbor islands, where resources for survivors are already scarce. It is time for policymakers to recognize the urgency of this issue and allocate the necessary funds to ensure that families and survivors do not continue to suffer in silence.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, my message to the community is clear: domestic violence affects us all. It impacts children's education, strains health care resources, disrupts neighborhoods and hinders economic productivity. The perpetuation of domestic violence is a generational cycle, and it is not solely the responsibility of survivors or service providers to break these cycles. It is a collective responsibility that requires the involvement of every sector of society. This starts with advocating for adequate funding, supporting innovative programs, and fostering a community of compassion and action. In doing this together, we can create a safer, more hopeful future for all.

MARCH

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Additional awareness events will be on Lanai (Thursday), Maui (Friday) and Kauai (Oct. 10). All the Aloha State efforts are in support of community, state and nationwide initiatives for National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The DVAC's Men's March was conceived to encourage everyone to help prevent domestic violence — especially men.

Men who believe they have the right to control and harm their partner or have specific beliefs about domination can contribute to the likelihood they will commit acts of domestic violence. Men must be allies for survivors and role models who tell other men that there's a better way.

When men take a stand against domestic violence, it has a significant impact on our community. Most men want to help but don't know how.

One of the men who will share his voice during the march is Steve Baginski, president and CEO of Kaikor Construction Company and immediate past president of the General Contractors Association of Hawaii (GCA). Baginski, DVAC's "Distinguished Citizen of the Year," spearheaded GCA's 2023 Give Back to the Community Program, which raised more than $50,000 for DVAC. His commitment to supporting DVAC is admirable; sadly, his reasons for seeking to raise awareness of domestic violence are horrifying.

Twelve years ago, his sister-in-law, only three years older than his wife and a favorite auntie of his children, was stabbed to death by her husband. As with any loss, his sister-in-law's murder touched many, many lives far beyond her own family.

Often there are warning signs that someone is being subjected to domestic or intimate partner violence, such as visible signs include cuts, scratches and bruises; controlling, jealous and verbally abusive behavior; or behavioral changes.

As a member of the community, if you see something, reach out. One of the best days of my life was when someone told me I was experiencing domestic violence. When they named it, I realized I was not alone. Many, many people want to help.

But what if there aren't any obvious warning signs? It can be extremely difficult for domestic violence survivors to leave their abusive partners or seek help.

Many don't reach out because they are ashamed. There is the shame of admitting they aren't as capable as they want people to believe they are and the shame of being unhappy in their own homes. In the military, a culture that emphasizes strength and resilience can make it harder for spouses and service members to admit vulnerability or seek help.

And that is why it is crucial we reduce shame and stigma. The Men's March is one of the ways we do that. Domestic violence survivors gain strength from knowing people believe in them and don't want to see them get hurt. And with that strength, they can get the help they need.

If you think you may be experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence, make a call. Don't wait. DVAC's confidential helpline is 808-531-3771.