

October shines light on domestic violence issues

By Sharon Hall
The Nugget

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It had its start in 1981 as the Day of Unity, an effort to connect battered women advocates nationwide. It then became a week-long effort with shelters and agencies hosting a range of events at the local, state and national levels. The events all centered around bringing awareness of the problem of domestic violence to the community, remembering those who had lost their lives due to domestic violence and celebrating survivors.

In 1987, the first month-long observance was held, but it wasn't until the late 1990s that Congress enacted the Violence Against Women Act. Since then, the nation's response to domestic violence has improved. Instead of being an issue considered as a family's private business, it is now addressed openly by law enforcement and the courts. There are more shelters for victims, and programs to address their needs.

In Lumpkin County, NOA (No One Alone) offers an emergency shelter and programs for victims of domestic violence. Four nurses at the local hospital, all too aware of the frequency of domestic violence from treating its victims, banded together in 1986 and formed a task force to address the problem. Starting with only a 24-hour emergency line in 1990, NOA has grown to include a shelter for victims (1992), counseling programs, legal advocacy and many other services for victims of domestic abuse as well as awareness education for the community.

But domestic abuse is still a fact of life for far too many women and their children.

Domestic violence is not limited to women, nor is it limited to heterosexual relationships. However, the majority of domestic violence victims are women, and their batterers are male. More women are injured by their significant other than in auto accidents, muggings and rape combined according to the Domestic Violence Resource Center.

One in four women will experience violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. Three women nationwide die each day due to domestic violence. And millions suffer silently, living in fear in their own homes.

In Lumpkin County, between October 2012 and September 2013, the sheriff's office responded to 256 reported domestic violence calls.

Last week for LCES Food Drive

This is the last week of the Lumpkin County Elementary School Food & Essentials Drive. The drive benefits Lumpkin County families in need.

Any non-perishable food items as well as household essentials are needed.

Items can be dropped off through Friday at the front office or taken to school by students.

The class with the most donations will win a pizza party.

There were probably more than that, says Abby Griffin, Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office Victims Services Coordinator, as no records were kept during the month that position was vacant.

"Domestic violence is the reason behind the majority of the cases the sheriff's office responds to," Griffin says.

"There are nights," says Chris Sosebee, LCSO's investigator of crimes against persons, when "domestic violence calls are 80 percent of all the calls we get. When you're on patrol, all the guys get subjected to domestic violence calls."

Domestic violence can range from insults and put-downs to isolation from family and friends, withholding money, intimidation, sexual assault, stalking, threatening physical harm or actual harm—slaps, shoves, punches, choking, throwing things, biting—any physically aggressive act. And in extreme cases, domestic violence can end in death. In Georgia, 130 women lost their lives due to domestic violence in 2010, the latest year statistics are available for from the Georgia Commission of Family Violence. Georgia ranks sixth in the nation for the homicide rate among females

murdered by males.

In 2001, one of those statistics was Lumpkin County resident Sherri Holland, killed by her ex-boyfriend who is now on death row, pending appeal.

It is a myth that domestic violence is something that happens only in poorly educated and economically disadvantaged families. Domestic violence crosses all social and economic lines, from the poorest to the richest, from the college educated to the high school dropout.

"It doesn't fit any one particular group of people," says Sosebee. "It doesn't matter what your background is, how much you make or how much education you have."

It is also a myth that incidents of domestic violence are isolated. Although in some cases abuse occurs without provocation, most often it follows a pattern. Abuse often happens in cycles, with explosions of violence that may seem related to a partner losing their temper. Batterers use violence to gain and maintain power and control, not because they lose control of their emotions.

The outbursts of violence are interspersed with periods of calm. During these times the partner may apologize

and become very loving, supportive and romantic, bringing flowers or gifts to "make up" for the outbreak—the "honeymoon phase."

Then tensions arise over a minor disagreement and continue to build over a period of time. It could be hours or days, even weeks or months until an abusive episode again explodes.

Those periods of calm and nurturing attention between incidents of violence often make the decision to leave an abusive situation difficult. The victim may rationalize the reasons for the abuser's behavior—stress, financial hardship, drug or alcohol abuse, jealousy.

"But domestic violence," says Andrea Shoemaker, NOA's Community Outreach Director, "is not OK. At no time is it OK to be unappreciated, disrespected or abused. And sometimes it means you have to get away, even if it means seeking temporary shelter."

There are other reasons victims find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. The victim has made an emotional investment, and often there are children involved. She may feel that even a bad father is better than no father at all.

Years of abuse have done damage to the victim's self image. Abused women often experience shame, embarrassment and humiliation.

They also may fear their abuser will become more violent if they leave.

Often, these women have been isolated by their abuser. They have no friends or family support systems. They have not been allowed to work outside the home and have no money of their own. They often do not have their own transportation.

NOA is able to help. "Our shelter provides a safe secure place and confidentiality," says Margie Greer, Chairman of NOA's

Board of Directors. "We invest in women and their children by helping them to overcome the trauma of abuse. We give hope by providing life skills training, trauma counseling, parenting classes, childcare, support groups, housing and financial assistance."

The crisis line number is 706-864-1986. Calls are handled by trained staff and available 24/7, offering immediate crisis intervention, confidential emotional support, and information about its shelter and support services, as well as referrals to other resources in the community.

If you are under immediate threat, however, call 9-1-1.

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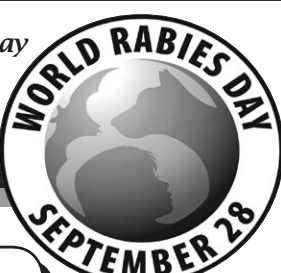
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WATER DEPARTMENT NOTICE

The Dahlonega Water Department will be flushing hydrants beginning September 29, 2013 through October 11, 2013. Residents may experience discolored water during this time. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Dahlonega Water Plant at 706-864-3591.

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Nov. 5th Special Election for Continuation of 1% Educational SPLOST

- The deadline for voter registration, name changes, or address changes is 10/7. Go to <http://www.sos.georgia.gov/MVP/Login.aspx> OR call (706)864-6279 to check your status and precinct.
- **Sample Ballots:** Go to www.lumpkincounty.gov/dept/election OR come to the Lumpkin County Election & Voter Registration Office, 99 Courthouse Hill, Suite G, Dahlonega, GA.
- **Advance Voting:** 10/14 - 11/1, M-F, 8am-5pm at the Lumpkin County Community Center, (Parks & Rec) 365 Riley Road, Dahlonega, GA.
- **Vote by Mail:** Go online to <http://www.lumpkincounty.gov/dept/election>, "Links," "Absentee Information." Fill out and print the absentee ballot application, mail it, or fax it to (706)864-0731 OR call (706)864-6279 to request an application. All applications must be received by 11/1. All voted ballots must be received by 7:00pm on 11/5.
- **Vote Election Day:** Polling places are open 11/5, 7am-7pm. Be sure to check your status before Election Day.

Advance Voting or Vote by Mail options are available to everyone.

The ballots to be used at such referendum shall have written or printed thereon substantially the following:

Shall a special one percent sales and use tax for educational purposes be imposed in Lumpkin County for a period not to exceed twenty (20) calendar quarters and for the purpose of raising not more than \$19,500,000 of net proceeds by said tax, which shall go to the School District for the purpose of (i) adding to, renovating, repairing, improving, equipping, and demolishing existing school buildings and school system facilities, including, but not limited to, roofing, HVAC and physical education/athletic facilities and fields; (ii) acquiring new computer hardware and software; (iii) acquiring miscellaneous new equipment, fixtures, and furnishings for the school district, including, but not limited to, safety and security equipment; (iv) acquiring school buses and transportation and maintenance equipment and facilities; (v) acquiring, constructing and equipping new buildings and facilities useful and desirable; (vi) acquiring land; and (vii) purchasing textbooks, the maximum amount sales and use tax proceeds to be spent on projects (i) through (vii) shall not exceed \$19,500,000.

Yes

No

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