

Confronting Domestic Violence

•Brown speaks out against a vile trend

By KENT ANDERSON
NEWS EDITOR

Denise Brown came to Alpena to speak to an audience of approximately 600 about domestic violence. She was the keynote speaker of the third program in Alpena General Hospital's "Look Who's Talking" series.

Brown is the sister of the late Nicole Brown Simpson, whose savage murder thrust domestic violence into the faces of people all over the world. According to Brown, the tragedy sparked a grim realization in her, as she had been unaware, before her sister's death, that someone in her own family was being abused.

"I didn't know that one human being would want to control another human being," she said. She decided to educate herself. According to Brown, she talked to experts, who recommended books,

which she read, she visited shelters, and now she travels the country, speaking from personal experience and new-found knowledge about domestic violence.

"I'd much rather have Nicole back than be up here talking to you about domestic violence," she said. But, because her sister was murdered, Brown found the drive to call upon all segments of society to rally against domestic violence.

"We've been quiet much too long," she said, regarding the old notion, which haunts society today, that domestic violence should remain a problem to be handled by the family. Communities need to pull together, Brown stated, and refuse to look the other way when there is knowledge of a violent domestic situation. Education and awareness are the only means to end family violence.

According to an informa-

tional packet endorsed by state representative Beverly Bodem, 95% of all assaults on spouses are committed by men.

Brown spoke directly to the male population. "Men have to raise their voices," she said, elaborating that men need to stand against domestic violence, to take action against the trend. Sixty-percent of all men will, at some point in their lives, be batterers. Fifty-five percent of men who choose to abuse have a problem with alcohol and/or drugs.

To young women, those of high school and college age, Brown said they need to love themselves before they attempt a relationship. Also, they need to realize that the popular athletes and the all-around popular guys are not, by reason of their semi-celebrity status, the perfect men to have relationships with.

Young women, she con-

tinued, need to understand that they must be confident about themselves and cautious about who they couple with.

After Nicole's death, members of the Brown family were fired with a motivation to make the public, as well as themselves, aware of domestic violence. So, the family formed the Nicole Brown Simpson Charitable Foundation, whose mission, as stated in a release from the Foundation, is "to help fund organizations that shelter and protect families caught in the crisis of family violence."

Furthermore, "by creating programs that respond to the causes of such violence, we (the Foundation) will facilitate treatment of both victim and aggressor."

According to a statement from the Foundation, it will "exhaust every means necessary to promote this simple message: There is no excuse

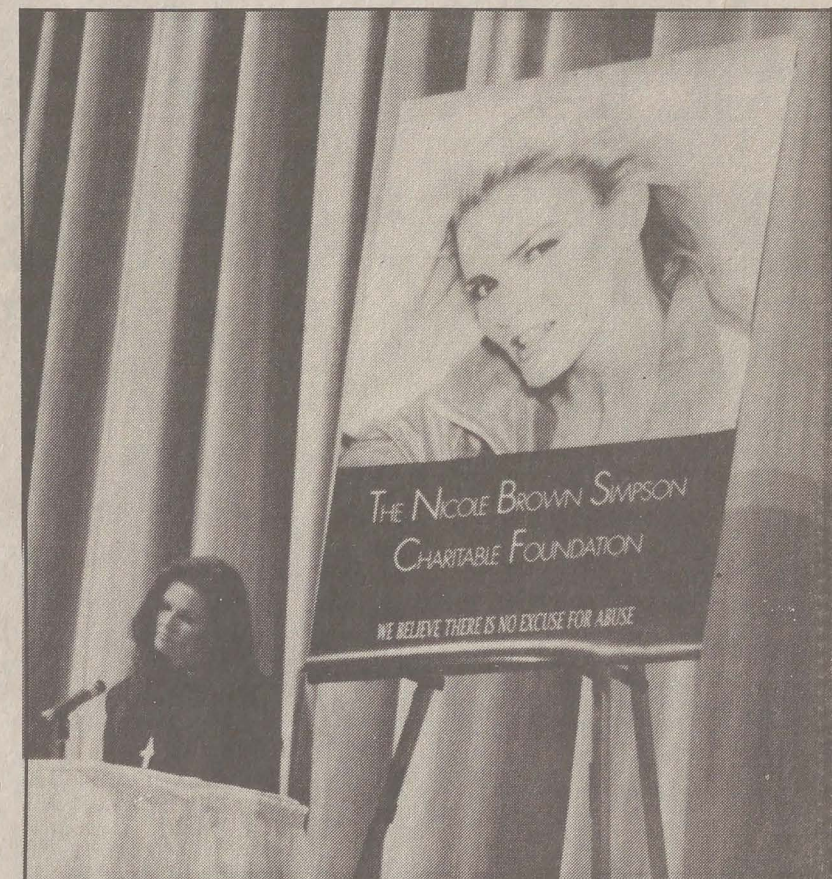


PHOTO BY DEBBIE PARKS

Denise Brown sits beside an image of her sister.

for abuse." Brown, who is the chairperson, said, "If we didn't have a cause to fight for, I think we would all be crazy."

In the Foundation's first year of existence, it granted a total of \$153,500 to 77 shelters across 32 states, including Michigan. No officer or director of the Foundation draws a salary or has an ex-

pense account.

The Foundation maintains only one full-time, paid employee. In 1995, it received \$296,676 in donations. During that same year, its operating expenses were \$125,239. The members of the Foundation pledge to "continue (their) work until family violence no longer exists."

Moving Graphic Arts

By RITA MACIEJEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

The Graphic Arts program has been located on the ACC campus, next to the Besser Technical Center, for 11 years. It is a vocational program supervised by the Alpena Public School system in which ACC students can enroll.

As the new center at ACC is nears completion, classes are getting ready to move, including Graphic Arts.

The Graphic Arts program could occupy a new classroom which would be built at Alpena High School, if a bond issue for \$26,995,000 is approved on June 10.

With the bond money a new, updated, fully equipped Graphic Arts facility could become reality.

Instructor Robert Jones stated, "Most of the equipment used now is antiquated and needs to be updated."

The new Graphic Arts location will be more accessible for high school students. Students without vehicles or working would have to plan their schedules. College enrollment will be affected.

Lee Sandy, superintendent of Alpena Public Schools, said, "It is important to have a Graphic Arts program and to involve new students, especially college students."

The need to upgrade area schools is great, as stated in the Alpena News by Alpena school board president Tom Ritter, "The year 2000 is almost upon us. But what was good enough for us in the 30s, 40s, and 50s, no longer matches the world our children and grandchildren live in. They'll live and work in the 21st century and they need schools for the 21st century."

The future location of the Graphic Arts program is unknown however, a decision will be reached by June 10.

Sandy stated, "If the first bond issue is voted down, there will be another bond issue brought up for vote."

•Stopping the deadliest threat to women's health

By KENT ANDERSON
NEWS EDITOR

Betty Mahmoody stood at the battered, brown podium, before a large, angelic poster of Nicole Brown Simpson. Mahmoody began the third program in the "Look Who's Talking" series. Domestic violence was the subject for the evening.

"Tonight, we are not going to be entertained," she said to the audience in Alpena High School's auditorium, on April 3.

Aspects of domestic violence were represented by speakers: Carolynne Wegmeyer, MSW, Counselor, of Thunder Bay Psychiatric Associates; Roger Bauer, Attorney-at-Law; Barbara Morgan, Director, Shelter Inc.; Betty Mahmoody, author of "Not without My Daughter"; Beverly Bodem, state representative; and Denise Brown, sister of Nicole Brown Simpson.

The previous programs in the series, "Look Who's Talking: Women in the 90's . . . and the men who love them," were focused on how to get more out of relationships and living. This latest installment, however, was about saving lives, not just improving them.

Each member of the panel had an opportunity to step up to the podium, to speak about domestic violence as it related to his or her area of experience. Though none of the presentations were the same, all of them had the same theme: domestic violence is nefarious, inexcusable, and occurring with menacing regularity.

"Domestic violence is at a crisis stage," said Bodem. She relayed that Michigan's shelters had to turn away over 2,000 people last year. There was not enough room to house all those seeking help.

The number of domestic violence cases seems to be on the rise. But, she added, it is

unclear whether this is because of previously existing situations coming into the light or because of truly new incidents.

Morgan said that there is a "domestic homicide" in Michigan every eight days.

The evening was an example of what is the best method of confronting domestic violence: individuals of various professions, related to domestic violence, coming together with other citizens to share information.

Brown said that everyone - politicians, police, judges, citizens - needs to be made aware and educated, so

domestic violence won't stay in the darkness of whispers and social pretense.

Bauer stated that there are measures within existing laws that can be utilized to protect victims and potential victims. And, in case his discourse was too dazzling for those unaccustomed to the language of law, the literature distributed at the conference brought the legal procedures into focus for the layman.

Bauer had advice for victims who seek help from the courts: "Testify, testify, testify. If you don't, he'll beat you again, because he knows he can get away with it."

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