

Family Violence

Verbal abuse has devastating effect on victim

By JACIE B. PALMER
Herald Special

This story is typical of a man who abuses his partner verbally again and again. Often the psychological abuse can be devastatingly difficult for a woman to handle. The physical scars will eventually disappear but what an abuser does to his victim's mind lasts a lifetime.

The victim tells her story this way: "He started out blaming me for our problems. It was always my fault. He told me I was sick. He told me I was the one responsible for our difficulties. By the time he started telling me I was crazy, I was too afraid to ask anyone for help. I was afraid of him and afraid he was right about me. Finally, I began to talk about the abuse to others. It wasn't easy but just admitting what was happening helped. Then I got counselling. He still believes everything was my fault and that I was crazy."

It is easy to view this woman's situation and say that it could

never happen to you. Yet this occurs in many abusive relationships. If anyone listens to abusive statements and put downs over and over again it is only a matter of time before those beliefs are internalized by the victim.

Telling his victim she is crazy or sick is a ploy an abuser uses to raise himself above his victim. He refuses to make decisions about his own life - perhaps he lost control years ago and doesn't know how to regain control. The victim may want to confront her abuser and insist he recognize his responsibility.

In order to reaffirm his belief in himself he must put her down. If only he can convince his victim she is sick she won't ask him to address the real problems of their life together. The problem is abusive behavior which he refuses to recognize and change.

The victim is usually isolated from family and friends. Families move, on average, every three years. Many families live great distances apart.

How have we compensated for developing and maintaining close relationships? What kind of alter-



nate support systems have we developed as a substitute family? An abused woman wants her problem kept secret. She fears

discovery. She is afraid of her partner. She is afraid to change her life. Any form of change is difficult. Fear of the unknown is scary for mentally well-adjusted individuals. For a victim of family violence, who is at best emotionally unstable, change is a nearly impossible challenge to face. Hence it is difficult for her to open up to friends.

Secretly she tears her partner is right and that she is crazy. How would the few friends she has feel if they discovered that?

Some crisis will arrive and the victim will make a decision to seek help. How bad will the emotional scars be? Will she have to go it on her own? Will she survive within the relationship?

Community support and understanding can help this victim. If you see a woman you believe could be in crisis because of an abusive relationship you must step forward to help her. If you notice a change in a woman's behavior you must make that extra effort to find out what is

wrong. Symptoms of abuse include: isolation, depression, anxiety and chronic complaints. Our community has a responsibility to stamp out abuse of all types.

All our children suffer when they are affected by abuse. Your children and mine cannot grow up to be emotionally healthy adults if they have abusive adults for role models. As they play together, your children will suffer from the affects of indirect abuse. It is in the long term interest of our community to ensure women are safe in their own homes in order that they may nurture and foster a positive environment for their families.

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at the Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to speak to Jacie, call the Distress Centre at 877-1211 and your call will be returned. If you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help, call the Distress Centre or dial 911.

The next best thing to seeing Santa is...

Georgetown and Acton students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 have a chance to talk to Santa Claus by phone this year.

As they have for the past six years, the Town of Halton Hills and the Georgetown Optimists are arranging to have Santa Claus call all Kindergarten and Grade 1 students in Georgetown in Acton who hand in forms to their school.

Calls from Santa will be made Dec. 16 and 18 between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

"It's a goodwill program that helps kids feel good about themselves," said Debbie Miethig, the Supervisor of Community Programs for the Town, who's coordinating the event.

The program involves the transaction of permission forms from the school, to parents and back to the school. Interested parents can write down specific information Santa might want to talk about with the child when they send the form back to school where Ms. Miethig will pick them up.

Often, parents request that Santa Claus praise their child for some good thing he or she has done.

"Sometimes we'll have a parent write in the form that their child

has done a really good job cleaning up his or her room and Santa can give this child a pat on the back for doing such a good job," said Ms. Miethig.

There are also parents who express that their child is going through a bad time due to a divorce or another type of emotional upheaval in the family.

"We get sad cases where parents ask Santa to help their child realize that even though his parents are divorced and he's living in a new house, Santa will still be able to find him," she said.

Last year, Santa Claus reached over 600 children, said Optimist John Crispin, who's chairing the event for the Optimists.

He said the club, whose theme is 'Friend to Youth', was eager to have the chance to participate in the program because it helps children.

If any parents haven't received forms to reserve a call from Santa, they can call Debbie Miethig at the Civic Centre 873-2600 to arrange for their child to be included.

Due to the number of children in Halton Hills, only students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 will receive calls from Santa Claus.

Local church was host to White Gift Service

By BETTY SOJKA
Herald Special

Last Sunday was a big day at the village church. Reverend Joe Smiley conducted the White Gift Service, which was combined with the Sunday School concert.

As the Sunday School teachers read aloud scriptures, the children acted out the nativity

Sunday School. It was close to 3:00 in the afternoon, before the activities came to an end.

Next Sunday, the Junior Choir will be presenting a musical "The Great Late Potentate", a man who was late for everything.

The group will be at St. Andrews for the 9:00 a.m. service, and then at Ballinafad United at 11:30 a.m. On Dec. 22 the Christmas Service will be held, and a Christmas Eve Service is scheduled Dec. 24 starting at 9:00 p.m.

The 4-H Achievement Night was held Monday, Dec. 2 at the Acton Legion, with the Acton/Dublin Club, being the host club. Members enjoyed Heather McIntosh, the Ontario Dairy Princess as guest speaker.

Each club had to have an exhibit, which was commented on by Halton Dairy Princess, Lisa Murray.

Ballinafad's exhibit was chosen overall.

The group had made a holstein cow out of wire and paper mache, then painted appropriately. A hospital surgical glove filled with milk, made the Holstein a working subject. Posters were hung outlining milk, cheese, etc. and farm pictures.



Hi there Santa

Seven-year-old Patrica Brown of Halton Hills tells Santa exactly what she wants for Christmas Saturday morning during his visit to Georgetown's Union Gas. (Herald Photo)

Ballinafad News

story. From the youngest of age 2, dressed as a sheep, to the older children dressed as angels, camels, donkeys and shepherds, the story of Jesus unfolded.

As part of the Annual White Gift Service, adults donated funds to the Mission and Service Fund, while the children brought canned goods for the local food bank.

Breaking only for lunch, the Christmas program continued with a skit titled "Down The Road To Bethlehem", carol singing, and a visit from Santa.

Each child received a gift, as well as an apple and a candy cane. Parents were given gifts, handmade by their children in

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