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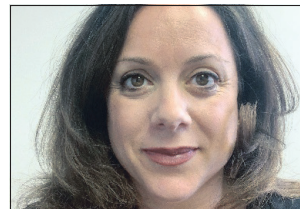
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OPINION

ONLY A COLLECTIVE EFFORT WILL END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Laurie Hepburn
Column

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario, and in Canada, it's National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence remains a prevalent issue across all communities in Halton — an issue that needs increased awareness and action every month, not just November. In Canada, a woman or a girl dies as a result of domestic violence every two and a half days.

Halton Regional Police Service responds to an average of nine calls a day related to intimate partner violence. Since the pandemic, Halton Women's Place has served almost 100 women and children through our shelter, 250 women through community services and received more than 1,100 crisis calls.

These numbers show the continued impact of domestic violence on our

community. Our work is more important than it has ever been, given the additional challenges of COVID-19. We know many women are isolated in unsafe situations and that home is not a safe place for everyone.

As we raise awareness around the prevalence of domestic violence, we will decrease stigma around speaking up about abuse and seeking support. We hope that all women impacted by domestic violence will come forward and we can empower individuals in the community to stand up against this issue and know where to get support.

As an organization, we continue to be fierce in our efforts to prevent domestic violence through education. However, we know that we have a long way to go until shelters are not needed.

Throughout the month, we will again shine the light on domestic violence through our wrapped in courage campaign by wearing purple, a colour that signifies courage ... because the courage of one woman is not enough. It takes an entire community to end violence against women.

Help us show women they are not alone by participating in our wrapped in courage campaign and highlight Halton in a sea of purple. You can purchase purple items — from men's socks to purple "Covered in Courage" masks, to beautiful beaded bracelets.

All these items and more can be found on www.haltonwomensplace.com/shop. Join us for #HWPPurpleDay on Nov. 13, 2020. Each and every day, you can help by believing the experiences that women share. Be kind, listen and check in with your friends, family members and colleagues. If you are concerned about someone's safety and are not sure how to start the conversation, contact our crisis, information and support line at 905-332-7892 or through our HWP Chat at haltonwomensplace.com/chat and we can help you find the words.

Thank you, Halton, for your continued support of the work that we do at Halton Women's Place as we also cannot do this work alone. It is truly a community effort to end violence against women.

Laurie Hepburn is the executive director at Halton Women's Place. She can be reached at Lhepburn@haltonwomensplace.com.

COMMUNITY

HALTON WOMEN'S SHELTER PREFERS GIFT CARD DONATIONS THIS CHRISTMAS

Halton Women's Place will be revising its holiday program this year, due to the pandemic.

Typically, HWP operates a Holiday Hamper Program to sponsor families who have stayed at the women's shelter, or used its services during the last year, with donations of toys, clothes and household items.

This year, however, in keeping with public health

protocols, families will still be sponsored but with gift cards instead of items. Due to the lack of storage space, volunteer capacity and the handling of items, community members can contribute by purchasing gift cards specific to family needs.

"We are proud of our program and we want the community to know that every family staying in our shelters this holiday sea-

son — as well as women we work with in the community — will receive a variety of gift cards," said Laurie Hepburn, HWP executive director.

"This will also empower women by providing them the opportunity to purchase their own items or the opportunity to buy gifts for their children — something many women tell us is important to them."

To find out more information about sponsoring a family, or donating to a gift card drive, email Kaitlin at kmckenna@haltonwomensplace.com.

legal matters | Child Support Adjustments

ASK THE PROFESSIONAL

Q

We work for you.

If you do not pay child support under the Child Support Guidelines after separation what are the possible consequences?

A

I often say to my clients in regard to child support the Child Support Guidelines make the support payable "written in stone". In court, there is practically no variation in child support from the Guidelines. If you know your income, you know your child support. The question now is what happens if you don't pay child support under the Guidelines for many years. The Supreme Court of Canada in September, 2020 answered that question by allowing a custodial parent arrears of child support dating back to 2001, from the date of separation.

For child support payors not adjusting your child support annually as your income rises exposes you to what could be a significant lump sum debt payable when your former spouse gets around to demanding it.

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