

Ganohkwasra launches family violence prevention program

By Jayson Koblun

OHSWEKEN – Violence affects everyone and each person who experiences the different types of violence is effected in their own personal way.

To bring awareness and education about family violence, Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services (GFASS) is hosting a 30-hour family violence prevention program in April.

The program is spread across the entire month and includes different workshop and information sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays that will teach people how to be more aware of issues involving violence and abuse within the community (one of the workshops falls on a Saturday).

“Family violence is the result of a much bigger pic-

ture stemming from colonization,” said Michelle Thomas, community organizer at GFASS. “We want to provide education for people on all the different forms of violence.”

GFASS is an organization in Ohsweken that respects the community’s traditional roles as Onkwehon:we women, men and children — upholding the principles of the importance of family. It recognizes the existence and devastation of family violence and sexual assault and accepts the responsibility to support victims in a time of crisis to provide shelter, support and counselling.

“Ganohkwasra promotes the message that we all have the ability to know when our minds are out of balance,” said Thomas. “Our goal is to educate people and help them

bring their minds back in balance.”

The facilitators of the program are seeking to create a safe, comfortable environment where participants can feel welcome to share their experiences, ask questions and be involved.

Some topics that will be covered in the program are — an introduction to Ganohkwasra and some background information of family violence in First Nations communities, sexual abuse, elder abuse, the relationship of substance abuse and there will also be a time to honour and show respect to men and women for the roles they have.

“The nights about our men and women will focus on our resiliency, what we have been through and what we still have to overcome,” said Thomas.

It costs \$100 to register for the program. The fee includes — light snacks, a tote, bag, a training binder, a certificate of completion and a celebration dinner that will be held when the program is over. All of the training materials participants receive can be kept and taken home.

“Those involved will be able to take the materials home and share what they’ve learned and are learning with their own families,” she said, also mentioning that the program is only available to men and women who are 18-years-old and older.

All of the workshops will be held in the Ganohkwasra Healing Centre on at 1781 Chiefswood Road, in Ohsweken. Thomas said that spots are filling up rather quickly for the program and if community members wish to regis-

ter that they should do so ASAP.

For more information about how to register and times for each session call 519-445-4324 or email communityeducation@ganohkwasra.ca.