

# SEEDS OF CHANGE

Prevention

Intervention

Ongoing Support

## Domestic Violence Doesn't Take A Holiday



This year, as you hang the twinkling lights and decorate your mantel with sprigs of holly, remember that not everyone has gotten the message that it's a season of peace. Unfortunately, the holidays can be an even more dangerous time than normal for those at risk for domestic violence.

From the financial stress of gift buying to an overall increase in alcohol consumption, to a flurry of emotions—and sometimes stress—that accompany a plethora of family togetherness time, there are many reasons why the chance of intimate partner violence can increase during the holidays. While there is no national study to measure the exact stats on holidays and domestic violence, says The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, they do point out that law enforcement agencies in many cities have noted more domestic violence reports on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day than on other days.

However, The National Do-

mestic Violence Hotline reports a decrease in calls—nearly 53 percent fewer—on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Whether survivors don't want to disturb family cohesiveness on these days, or can't find a private time to make a call for support, advocates say the decline isn't necessarily an indication that violence ceases on these days, reporting that calls will often increase above normal levels the days and weeks following a holiday. Many times, say advocates, survivors of abuse don't want to disturb family rituals or separate children from their family during a holiday, regardless of abuse that may be occurring.

What can you do? If you're currently in a violent relationship, reach out to domestic violence nonprofit, The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); it is available 24/7. And, remember, you don't need to figure out an escape plan right away—you can simply call to talk. Or if you like reading first,

there are many short articles covering domestic violence topics on this site. If you can't call safely from home, call from a trusted friend's house, your doctor's office or a public library.

If you suspect someone in your life is the victim of an abusive relationship, watch for red flags, such as possessiveness, rigid gender roles, and overt control of deliberately humiliating one's partner in front of others. To support a victim, The Hotline advises friends and family members be non-judgmental and supportive. "Don't tell them what they need to do. Don't bad-mouth the abuser. It's also important to remember that friends and family should take precautions to make sure they remain safe. Sometimes when word gets back to the abuser that a friend or family member is offering advice or asking questions about the abuse, they could be putting themselves in danger."

\*Article by  
Domesticshelters.org

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## Prevention Program Spotlight

Hello everyone, my name is Rhonda Annala and I am entering my 21st year with Mutual Ground as the Coordinator for the Prevention Education Program. My staff and I go to schools to present safety programs on Sexual Assault and Dating/Domestic violence. Over the years, we have had the opportunity to impact the lives of thousands of children by giving them simple and pertinent safety lessons. In the process, we have had hundreds of children disclose abuse. These stories are heartbreaking. To think anyone could hurt a child sexually is not only heinous but tragic. What is more tragic is the thought that if we were not in those classrooms, those children may have never been given the permission or opportunity to tell someone about the abuse.

The 3 core concepts in every program we do are to EDUCATE, INFORM, and EMPOWER. We EDUCATE students about sexual abuse according to their age level, we INFORM them on what to do if they ever have a problem like this, and we EMPOWER them to tell a trusted adult if someone has touched them inappropriately.

In January of 2013, Illinois joined the ranks of 6 other states to adopt Erin's Law. Erin's Law mandates public schools to provide age appropriate sexual abuse prevention information to students in grades pre K through 12 on a yearly basis. Although a WIN for those of us in prevention work, the law also presents a serious funding issue. Unfortunately, the mandate is unfunded, meaning there is no money backing this program. Prior to Erin's Law being enacted, our program was working at capacity. Meaning all five of our part time Prevention Educators were doing as many programs as we could fit into our schedules. Since the passing of Erin's Law, we have been inundated with requests from school districts to assist them with maintaining compliance. Unfortunately, due to the influx of requests and the decrease in State funding, we are no longer able to offer our programs for free.

The value of these programs is immeasurable. We are only three months into the 2015-2016 school year and we have already had 22 students ask to speak privately with a presenter. Twenty-three students adults have made disclosures during our programs resulting in 10 referrals to Mutual Ground, 11 referrals to school personnel, and 4 DCFS calls.

To date, 26 states have adopted Erin's Law. PLEASE help our efforts to bring this valuable safety information to children. We know the offenders are telling children that these inappropriate touches are OK, and that they should keep them a secret. Let's work together teach children the truth! The truth is that it is NEVER okay for an adult to act sexually with a child, under any circumstances.

\*For more information about the Prevention Program at Mutual Ground, please contact Rhonda Annala at 630.897.0084 ext. 107.

## Join us on December 1st for #GivingTuesday

Not familiar with #GivingTuesday? Giving Tuesday is a global day dedicated to giving back. Charities, families, businesses, community centers, and students around the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give.

Please consider making a donation to Mutual Ground this #GivingTuesday so that we can continue to provide life-changing services to those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.

This year, Mutual Ground has two very

generous donors, including Aurora's very own Kevin Fitzpatrick, willing to match #GivingTuesday donations made to MGI up to \$5,500!

To make a donation, please visit our website at [www.mutualground.org](http://www.mutualground.org). Thank you in advance for your continued support!

Black Friday. Cyber Monday.  
#GIVINGTUESDAY  
December 1, 2015

## Volunteer Update



Meet two of our youngest volunteers, Ana Powell and Connie Linardos.

Ana and Connie wanted to do something for children and to give back to their community. So in 2013 they came up with “Good Night Sleep Tight”. The girls created a beautifully wrapped package filled with a book, blanket, and pajamas to give to children in need.

With the backing of their church, the Geneva United Methodist Church, they began their project. As the project grew, they received

assistance from Girl Scouts, schools, and other clubs. These organizations were involved in raising money for the materials as well as participating blanket tying events.

This year Anna and Connie made and delivered 300 beautifully wrapped bundles. Mutual Ground’s children have been lucky enough to benefit from this wonderful project for years and for that we are always grateful.

Thank You Ana and Connie you make a difference in the lives of our most precious gift — children!



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418 Oak Ave.  
Aurora, IL  
60506  
Phone: 630-897-0084  
Fax: 630-897-3536  
E-mail: info@mutualground.org

**Please visit our website to see our updated wish list at [www.mutualground.org](http://www.mutualground.org)**



Mutual Ground Inc. was founded in 1975, with the goal of providing programs that focus on Prevention, Intervention, and Ongoing Support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their families. Mutual Ground is now one of the largest and oldest domestic violence/sexual assault agencies in the state of Illinois. All services are victim-centered and focus on advocacy that empowers each individual to make her/his own decisions.

Located in Aurora, Illinois. Our service area is the Greater Aurora area, including all of Southern Kane and Kendall Counties.

## COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Mutual Ground would like to thank our friends from the 100 Women Who Care groups in Geneva, Fox Valley, and Oswego|Montgomery|Yorkville. Each of these three groups chose Mutual Ground as their Charity of Choice during their quarterly meeting! Their donations come at a crucial time as Mutual Ground has gone four months without full payment from the State of Illinois due to the budget impasse.

Not familiar with 100 Women Who Care? 100 Women Who Care consist of 100 women coming together to make a positive impact within their community. These groups meet four times a year, for one hour, with each member donating \$100 for a local charity chosen by the group. The concept is simple but VERY impactful! For more in-

formation on how to join these wonderful groups please visit the websites listed below!

**100 Women Who Care Geneva**  
[www.100womenwhocaregeneva.com](http://www.100womenwhocaregeneva.com)

**100 Women Who Care Fox Valley**  
[www.100womenwhocare.wix.com/foxvalley](http://www.100womenwhocare.wix.com/foxvalley)

**100 Women Who Care Oswego | Montgomery | Yorkville**  
<http://www.100wvc-omy.org>

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you 100 Women Who Care - Geneva, Fox Valley, and Oswego | Yorkville | Montgomery. Your dedication to making a difference in your communities is truly inspiring!

