

Students give out White Ribbons to halt domestic violence

The Newburyport Daily News
February 12, 2008

By Charles Frost
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AMESBURY — In the region that the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center serves, 33 percent of all domestic violence cases come from Amesbury.

Students at Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning are hoping to lower those numbers drastically as they take part in the White Ribbon Campaign this week.

The White Ribbon Campaign is an effort begun in 1991 to encourage men to show support and to take a stand to end domestic violence by wearing a white ribbon. Women are also encouraged to wear white ribbons.

Students at Amesbury Academy joined the White Ribbon Campaign after a presentation from Detective Robert Wile about what his job entails and how he helps women get out of domestic violence situations.

Bethany Noseworthy, guidance counselor at the academy, said that after several recent domestic violence cases, this was the perfect time for students to get involved.

"The statistics show that one in four women experience domestic violence," Noseworthy said. "So if you take the stats to the 50 kids in school and look around the student population, someone they know has been exposed to domestic violence."

Principal Donna Georges agreed with Noseworthy, saying that studying violence inspired students to want to make a change.

"I think that a lot of students in school have a passionate belief about how people should be treated," Georges said. "A lot of them have had personal experience where violence has touched their lives and in studying about violence, it piqued their interest in how to make a difference."

As part of the academy's community service learning project, Think Globally, Act Locally, and Massachusetts' first White Ribbon Day on Thursday, students, in conjunction with Wile, have been creating white ribbons to be distributed to local businesses with marquee signs that explain what White Ribbon Day is.

The ribbons have been attached to little pieces of paper that provide a Web site for more information about White Ribbon Day. Students have created posters and signs as well to hang up to spread the word to end domestic violence against women.

Parents of all school-age children in Amesbury will also be receiving a student-designed brochure explaining the White Ribbon Campaign.

Georges said she is pleased to be a part of Massachusetts' first White Ribbon Day.



Students at Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning are helping out with the White Ribbon Campaign, which advocates against domestic violence. Ashley Padova, 15, left, cuts out cards that explain the day that will be placed in business and public locations along with the ribbons that Grant Johnson, 17, is making. Bryan Eaton / Staff photo

"Violence prevention has always been one of my passions," Georges said. "For this school to be a place where it takes off is exciting."

Sophomore Ron Bailey said his goal is to stop at least one person from committing domestic violence, which he says can lead to millions taking a stand against domestic violence.

"If I can just stop one person, it's fantastic," Bailey said. "If one person stands up (against domestic violence), it can change to 10 people (standing up), then 10 to a hundred, a hundred to millions."

Melissa Rawding, a junior, wants to raise awareness throughout the community with the White Ribbon Campaign.

"As a school, as a community, we should stick together and try to help," she said.

Randy Mason, a sophomore, said the campaign has already changed attitudes among students around the school.

"(It) stopped the general joking around part of it, the name-calling is not as bad," Mason said.

Georges said there are several reasons why the school's community service learning project theme, Think Globally, Act Locally, is focused on preventing the exploitation of women and children this year.

"The students in this school have a strong interest in the topic in terms of issues of injustice," Georges said. "It helps them to take positive personal actions, it's a part of creating change in the community. If every individual takes a stand in any way, the number multiplies. Kids do an extraordinary job when taking action."

Noseworthy believes that the White Ribbon Campaign and White Ribbon Day will greatly benefit students in their future.

"It's important for them as young men and women to be aware and be educated about how important it is to not keep quiet in a situation where you may be witnessing, experiencing or hearing about somebody that is a victim," Noseworthy said.