



NEWS RELEASE



ALACHUA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Local Domestic Violence Center Commemorates National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

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Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network plans activities throughout the month

GAINESVILLE- Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network will again commemorate national Domestic Violence Awareness month during October 2008. Locally, domestic violence remains a critical concern for many adults and children and costs us millions in healthcare, social services, and law enforcement efforts. During 2007, Peaceful Paths provided emergency shelter and transitional housing to 196 adults and children for a total of 8,300 shelter nights. Outreach services were provided to 701 new clients in support groups, parenting classes, children's programs, victim advocacy, and individual counseling. Over 1,200 hotline calls were answered, and 1,700 safety plans were completed. The agency provided over 8,000 hours of free education and counseling to victims seeking assistance. Nearly 250 individual community and professional education sessions were provided to 1,900 students and 3,300 community members on topics ranging from domestic violence and healthcare to teen dating violence. In total, the 25 staff persons and numerous volunteers working with Peaceful Paths provided over 11,000 services to the victims of domestic violence in our area. FDLE reports that during 2007, there were 1,602 arrests for domestic violence crimes in Alachua County, 247 arrests in Bradford County, and 30 arrests in Union County. Among those, there was 1 domestic violence homicide and 1 manslaughter in these counties last year. The current Peaceful Paths Board Chair, Brian Scarborough, stated that, "Ending domestic violence is an issue everyone can get behind. The social change work Peaceful Paths engages in focuses on preventing violence for our children, the equality of women, and the need for society to hold batterers accountable. With the strength of our community partners, staff, and volunteers, we are working to create a world where intimate partner violence is not tolerated." Domestic violence crimes continue to be the leading cause of traumatic death among pregnant women in the US, and women continue to be 8 times more likely to be a victim of crime at the hands of an intimate partner than of a stranger, according to the US Department of Justice reports.

The agency plans to hold several events for the community to participate in as part of the annual remembrance of victims of domestic violence.

The annual Candlelight Vigil will be held on Thursday, October 2nd from 6 -7:30 pm at the Northside Park in Gainesville, one mile south of HWY 441 on NW 34th Street (where the disc golf course is located). This year's program will include live music, food, the inspirational words of a survivor, comments from local State Attorney Bill Cervone and Sheriff Sadie Darnell, as well as a commemorative candle-lighting ceremony to honor local victims. Peaceful Paths will also give out annual awards. This year's honorees are Alachua County Housing Authority for Community Partner of the Year, Sage Software as Business Partner of the Year, Dot Wessels for Volunteer of the Year, Sheriff Sadie Darnell for Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and Jennifer Dyal-Lowe as Employee of the Year.

The annual Guest Chef Cocktail Party will be held on Thursday, October 16th from 6-8 pm the Sweetwater Branch Inn, 625 East University Ave. The evening will feature food from 25 community hosts who will share samples of their favorite recipes, along with a wine bar. Tickets for the event are \$50. Local jazz duo Gosia and Ali will provide live musical entertainment and attendees can bid on a selection of items at the silent auction, including signed artwork from the UF coaches, Gator collectibles, vacation getaways, original framed artwork, and a handmade garden stepping stone by State Attorney Bill Cervone. All attendees will receive a complimentary cookbook with the recipes from the evening, and tickets include a wine and coffee bar. For information on how to attend, please contact 377-5690, or visit our website at www.peacefulpaths.org.

The UF Panhellenic Council will hold a 5k run on Sunday, October 21 on the UF campus. Registration begins at 8:00 am at the Commuter Lot on Gale Lemerand Blvd., or can be completed in advance of the event on the organization's website, www.ufpanhellenic.com. Proceeds from these events will support Peaceful Paths' client services programs.

On November 6, 2008 a community partners groups will kick off a 6 month project, Hope Happens Here: Mission Makeover. Owners and partners from Tioga's Salon 119, Dermacare, Sadove Cosmetic Surgery, and Tower Dental Group are banding together to bring awareness to the issue of domestic violence and change the life of a deserving woman touched by domestic violence. Over a six month period, this group will work to raise awareness through trainings, provide free services to victims and families, and encourage the community to participate in ending domestic violence. The finale of the group's work will be a reveal party in late March where a deserving woman will present her new self to the community.

For more information on any of these events, please contact Dr. Theresa Harrison at 352-377-5690 or theresah@peacefulpaths.org or visit us on the web at www.peacefulpaths.org

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