

# THE SILENT ROAD

BY DONNA BARTOS

## WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior used by one person in an intimate relationship to gain power and control over another. In addition to physical violence, abuse includes name calling, humiliating in front of others, controlling what one wears, says and does, controlling financial decisions, destroying property, and using children to control one's partner. Domestic abuse happens between people of all racial, economic, educational and religious backgrounds, in heterosexual and same-sex relationships; whether living together or separately with a partner, married or unmarried, in a short-term or long-term relationship, it can happen to you.

Until three summers ago, I did not consider myself a victim or a survivor of domestic abuse. In fact, I didn't know there was a name for what I experienced between the ages of 16 to 21. The battered women with bruised faces in the billboard and glam-magazine ad campaigns had nothing in common with me. I didn't appear depressed or sporting a black eye. I wasn't a mom slipping out with my children in the middle of the night to flee an abusive husband. Instead, I was just a college girl who had a boyfriend with anger issues and I was sure I could change him. I didn't know his degrading words such as, "You're so fat that no one else will love you if you break up with me," were issues of power and control. Or that the times he'd twist my arm, pinch me or slap me had a name: domestic abuse. In fact, instead of feeling sorry for myself, I felt sorry for him ... maybe because he was deaf or because I really believed he would change. Despite his disability, he was my cute, popular, high school sweetheart and I was in love with him. But a bloody night in 1993 opened my eyes to how unhealthy our relationship really was. My boyfriend interpreted my conversation with another guy at a fraternity party as "flirting." After the party, he grabbed me, pushed me down and bashed my head into the concrete floor of his dorm room.

It took that level of violence to wake me up, and I ended the relationship. But it would take more than this scalp-splitting moment to break my silence. I was embarrassed to share the true reason for breaking up with the person everyone thought I would marry. Instead, I made the excuse that he had cheated on me.

After college, I put my heart into my work as a nonprofit fundraiser. After dating a few other "winners," I met Peter, my one-of-a-kind husband, and we married in 2002. With my successful career and confident exterior, even Peter didn't know about the secret I'd kept hidden until a few summers ago.

## INSPIRATION

In 2006, I attended a seminar about a philanthropy program called Cut It Out, a domestic violence education program for salon professionals. Memories of my experience came flooding back. I was one of the silent victims, and I'd hidden my secret for more than 12 years. In that moment, I felt an inescapable obligation to fight against the violence - that had not only hurt me personally - but also affects a staggering percentage of women. With domestic abuse causing the deaths of four women and an estimated five children each day in the United States alone, becoming active in the fight against this kind of abuse was perhaps the only way to make sense of what I had gone through.

On the airplane ride home from the seminar, I sketched out a plan for a national awareness, fundraising and empowerment event. I took the notes I'd scribbled on a series of airline cocktail napkins and asked my network of friends and colleagues to help. The result was a pilot, turnkey, branded grassroots event called Girls Night Out to Cut Out Domestic Abuse. The goal of Girls Night Out is to educate at the most basic level, so that all of us — moms, dads, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons and friends — can recognize the signs of domestic abuse and know how to respond. It isn't easy

knowing what to say, what not to say, or where to refer someone for help.

A huge gap in prevention can be filled in our own backyards. Chances are you or someone you know has been a victim of domestic abuse. Yet, across the board, people do not know how to help. With this lack of knowledge and understanding, the abused live in silence, and those who love and care about them say nothing as well. One hundred women are projected to lose their lives this year in Arizona to domestic abuse. An integral component of Girls Night Out to Cut Out Domestic Abuse is to break this silence and build awareness. But through whatever means, we owe it to one another to learn how to recognize, respond and refer in domestic abuse situations.

## THE BIG EVENTS

Girls Night Out to Cut Out Domestic Abuse events are "ticket only" affairs hosted by partner spas and salons, with door prizes, silent auctions and food and beverages sponsored by local restaurants and businesses. Each event also provides information on local shelter and prevention resources, as well as education on how to recognize and respond to the signs of domestic abuse. Each Girls Night Out committee follows a turnkey plan and is given access to a chairperson site where they can download documents, logos and appeal letters. Girls Night Out events are led by volunteer committee members—many of whom have experienced domestic abuse personally.

## PURPLE RIBBON

With the help of Arizona attorney Jill Ormond and Eve's Place Safehouse, I also formed a companion agency called the Purple Ribbon Council, a national network of survivors and advocates who work in partnership to elevate public awareness by building a cause-marketing brand. The goal is to engage everyday people in a process for action and change. Eve's Place of Surprise, Arizona, is the Purple Ribbon Council's 501c3

fiscal agent and national launch partner. Because of Eve's Place, the Purple Ribbon Council is now positioned to raise funding locally and nationally.

We hope you will join us in Girls Night Out, a 100 percent volunteer-led event to support, benefit and empower to cut out domestic abuse. Domestic violence is not just an issue for law enforcement, legislators and counselors to solve. We need more hope, tougher accountability measures, proactive responses and genuine collaboration from the bottom up.

## GET INVOLVED

The Purple Ribbon Council is seeking volunteers to get involved and support their mission. Please consider helping in the following roles: survivor speakers, Cut It Out program facilitators, fundraising volunteers, administrative support, action task force volunteers, Purple Ribbon Brunch host volunteers, event volunteers and more. To get involved, contact Donna Bartos at: [donnabartos@purpleribboncouncil.org](mailto:donnabartos@purpleribboncouncil.org) or visit [www.purpleribboncouncil.org](http://www.purpleribboncouncil.org).

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

### RECOGNIZE IT- SPOT THESE SIGNS

- Obvious injuries such as black eyes, bruises, broken bones and hearing loss, which victims often attribute to falls or clumsiness.
- Turtlenecks in warm weather, heavy makeup, or sunglasses worn indoors
- Signs of anxiety and fear
- Isolation; avoiding family and friends
- Depression, suicidal thoughts, or other signs of emotional distress

### RESPOND TO IT

- Indirectly probe the issue by saying something such as, "I've noticed you don't seem like yourself lately and I'm concerned about you. Is there anything I can do?"
- If she acknowledges the abuse, respect her reluctance to talk about it. Be patient and listen. Do not pry. You can say, "I'm concerned for your safety" or "You are not responsible for this and don't deserve to be emotionally hurt, financially controlled or physically abused."
- Always say that you will support her and her decisions, and don't be judgmental.
- Don't tell her what you think she should do. Respect her ability to solve her own problems. Listen!
- Don't invite her to stay with you, and don't go to her home to help collect her things.

### WHERE TO REFER

- Let her know that she doesn't need to go through her ordeal alone. Give her the national hotline number, which can help connect her to local resources: 800.799.SAFE.

### IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

- Tell someone you can trust. There are people out there to help. Don't give up. Call 800.799.SAFE.
- If you are in a life-threatening situation, call 911.
- Be sure to have a safety plan, and teach it to your children.
- Prepare for an emergency. Copy important papers, have an extra set of keys made and hide some money.
- Don't take threats against your life lightly. If someone threatens to kill you, find a way to safety immediately. Don't lull yourself into thinking he won't go that far.
- Always remember that you are not alone.

Donna Bartos is Founder of the Purple Ribbon Council and Girls Night Out to Cut Out Domestic Abuse.



# SAVE THE DATE

## 4TH ANNUAL



Join the nationwide movement that celebrates survivors of domestic abuse and the power of women to band together to Support, Benefit, and Empower! **Break the Silence, Break the Cycle, Save Lives.**

★ **10 million children witness domestic abuse in their home annually across the U.S.**

★ **Four women die everyday in the U.S & 100 Arizona women die each year to domestic homicide.**

*Proceeds from GNO-Valley of the Sun events benefit the Purple Ribbon Council, Purple Ribbon Fund for Children, Cut It Out and Eve's Place.*

**Thursday, May 7, 2009 | 6pm-10pm**

**Dolce Salon & Spa: Chandler, Borgata, Arrowhead**

**\$15 General Admission**

**\$30 Support Level w/ Manicure OR Hot Stone Neck Massage**

**\$60 Benefit Level w/ Pedicure OR Hot Stone Neck and Shoulder Massage**

**\$90 Empower Level w/ Hair & Make-up**

**\$250 Circle of Hope Sponsor**

**Ticket reservations open April 1st**

*(All reservation levels include dessert & coffee sampling, friend-raising and door prize entry.)*

**[www.purpleribboncouncil.org](http://www.purpleribboncouncil.org) | 484.515.1064**

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