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Orinda City Council Proclaims October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month

By Laurie Snyder



Orinda Mayor Amy Worth and members of the Orinda City Council declared October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Orinda, presenting a copy of their proclamation Oct. 1 to representatives from STAND For Families Free of Violence. From Left: Nadia Costa and Katie Owensby, board member and development associate from STAND, Orinda mayor Amy Worth and city council members Sue Severson, Steve Glazer, Victoria Smith, and Dean Orr. Photo Ohlen Alexander

violence is happening everywhere," added Orinda resident and STAND board member Nadia Costa. "Even in Orinda."

In Devera's case, she was battered in 2006 by Miramonte High School graduate, James Collin. In 2012, he allegedly used a machete to end her life. Collin remains in custody on \$2.1 million bail, charged with torture and murder. His most recent court appearance was yesterday.

There is often a history of abuse in such cases, explains STAND's CEO Gloria Sandoval. Up to 85 percent of men in prison were battered or sexually molested as kids. "The last few years of research has played a significant role in our understanding that domestic violence (DV) in a home setting affects children dramatically. They don't even have to be in the home or aware of what's going on to be impacted. It's the tension that creates long-lasting trauma. Kids with parents committing domestic violence have a much higher propensity to become a victim or a perpetrator themselves."

Orinda Police Chief Scott Haggard concurs, noting that "a lot of children act out what they see."

"It's learned behavior," says Sandoval. "We believe strongly that it can be unlearned." STAND offers counseling for those who may be harming others and also operates a 52-week intervention program for convicted batterers, helping them "understand that violence is not a reasonable solution to conflict in the family." In addition, STAND is piloting a new initiative with law enforcement agencies. "We are using national best practice homicide reduction survey tools which have been shown to reduce domestic violence-related homicides in other communities nationwide."

For more information about STAND visit www.standagainstdv.org/.

"Whereas: the problems of domestic violence are not confined to any group or groups of people but cross all economic, racial, affectional preference and societal barriers and are supported by societal indifference; the crime of domestic violence violates an individual's privacy, dignity, security and humanity due to the systematic use of physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and economic control and/or abuse; the impact of domestic violence is wide-ranging, directly affecting men, women, and children, and society as a whole.... Be it resolved, that the City of Orinda does hereby proclaim October 2013 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and urges all citizens to actively participate in the efforts to end violence in our homes, in our schools, and in our communities."

It was with the memories of homicide victims such as Evangeline Cumbe Devera, as well as of Orindans still living through emotional and physical abuse, that the Orinda City Council recently issued the inspiring call to action above and kicked off National Domestic Violence Awareness Month on Oct. 1.

The City Council also paid tribute to STAND For Families Free of Violence for providing abuse prevention and recovery programs for families and individuals in and beyond Lamorinda. Services include a 24-hour crisis line, batterer treatment, employment training, home-like emergency and transitional shelters, legal advocacy, and counseling for individuals, families, teens, and children.

As STAND representative Katie Owensby accepted the proclamation, she noted that one in four women will be affected by domestic violence during their lives. Sixty percent have children under the age of 18. "Domestic



From Left: Nadia Costa and Katie Owensby, board member and development associate from STAND Photo Ohlen Alexander

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