

Honouring the Resilience, Determination of Women

November 30, 2009

By Lynda Muir

Each year activists from around the world take part in a 16 day global campaign to raise awareness about violence against women. This campaign begins on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign is recognized globally by over 150 countries, including Canada, and provides an opportunity for activists to work together to draw attention to violence against women worldwide.

Gender-based violence affects all of us, not just women living with abusive partners. It affects women who fear being on the street alone at night or who are reluctant to leave their drinks unattended at a bar.

It affects young women who are bombarded by media images which portray them as vulnerable, weak, thin and sexually accessible.

It affects young boys who grow up believing that violence is the only way to solve problems and that control over people is a measure of strength.

It affects our sisters, daughters, nieces and granddaughters who have to survive in a world where they are confronted with images of male violence and female vulnerability every day of their lives.

Our community is not immune to gender-based violence. By November 13, 2009, the Barrie Police had responded to 1,533 domestic calls and 82% of those charged were men. On average there are approximately 140 occurrences per month which means that by the end of the year the Barrie Police will have been called to over 1,700 domestic incidents.

Canada has its own grim reminder of violence against women which falls within the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. In the late afternoon of December 6, 1989 a lone gunman walked into École Polytechnique in Montreal and murdered 14 women before killing himself. This was one of the earliest school massacres of such magnitude and the most misogynistic. The women in the college were killed because they were women and for no other reason.

December 6 was declared a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women by the Federal Government in 1991. Those of us working to end gender-based violence, like the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie, have commemorated this tragic event in our nation's history each year since 1989.

It's a sad commentary on our society that twenty years after Montreal we still need to be reminded that violence against women exists and that women and children continue to experience abuse in their lives.

The Women and Children's Shelter and Colibri: Centre des femmes francophones du comté de Simcoe are hosting the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on Sunday, December 6 at the Downtown Community Theatre, 1 Dunlop Street, Barrie. The doors open at 2:00 pm and the event starts at 2:30 pm.

Although this is a solemn occasion it provides an opportunity for us to come together as a community and pay tribute to the resilience and determination of women. We will honour all the women and children who have died as a result of gender-based violence, celebrate the courage and strength of women who have survived abuse and acknowledge the work being done to address violence against women in the community.

Please join us.

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of the Women & Children's Shelter of
Barrie*