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For Immediate Release

Safe Passage, Inc.

Contact: mmattingly@safepassageinc.org

812-933-1990 or 812-212-1274



Feb. 24 dance spotlights teen dating violence

Hurtful name calling, slapping, and posting rumors on social media are not normal, respectful behaviors in a dating relationship. Never. That's the message the Batesville High School Safe Passage Youth Council wants to share. They'll do so in a healthy and fun environment with the third annual Winter Rose dance on Feb. 24 at RomWeber Marketplace in Batesville. "It's going to be really fun! We have a DJ, a photo booth, games like cornhole and free arcades, plus lots of cookies and cupcakes! If you're looking for something to do on a Friday night this would be a great place to go," said Carissa Werner, BHS student and member of the Safe Passage Youth Council.

While the dance is a social activity, the message surrounding it is much more serious. Taylor Meyer, BHS senior, commented on teen dating violence awareness, "It's important to inform students about it when they are young so they would not be prone as adults to be victims." And Beau Brown, another club member, said domestic violence awareness starts at the grass roots level and "instills what a healthy relationship looks like." That way, when teenagers mature into romantic adult relationships they will have a better understanding about respect of a partner.

The dance costs \$3, and is open to all high school students, not just Batesville students. For more information contact Safe Passage Prevention coordinator Samantha Santen at 812-933-1990.

1 in 10 experience or know of teen victim

Safe Passage promotes teen dating violence awareness month

"He hits me... He loves me."

These are the conflicting words from a 20 year old Indianapolis woman who was brutally murdered by her estranged boyfriend. Joshua Bean was convicted of the 2007 death and is serving a 68 year prison term.

Heather Norris can't tell her story of dating violence, but her mother Debbie has made it her mission to do so after she tragically lost her daughter. She campaigned for a state-wide education mandate for schools to address issues surrounding dating violence. In 2012, Gov. Mitch Daniels signed "Heather's Law," which requires the Indiana Department of Education to develop response and reporting policies for dating violence, as well as educating students on the issue.

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness month. Dating violence is defined as the act of controlling and/or abusive behavior in a romantic relationship. It can happen to both males and females.

There is a local organization that addresses the issue of teen dating violence. Safe Passage, the domestic violence shelter based in Batesville but serves six counties in Southeast Indiana, has a Prevention Team made up of three 20-something women who address teen dating at the area schools. College educated and graduates of area high schools (Franklin County, South Dearborn and South Ripley), the trio spoke in November to Ohio County Elementary Middle

School “My Empowerment” group about the types of abuse: physical, emotional/mental and sexual. The middle school Empowerment group is made of about 20 young females with the aim to improve healthy relationships, body image, leadership skills and community involvement. They also facilitate a Safe Passage Youth Council, an initiative for area high school students focused on building and maintaining healthy teen dating relationships. In addition to the council itself, SPYC has two clubs in Batesville and Oldenburg high schools, with a third on its way in South Dearborn High School. The BHS club is one of the largest extracurricular clubs in the school. Students at South Dearborn recently created public service announcements to air at school, on the radio and at the local movie theaters.

The Prevention team conducted a survey last year among 112 Batesville teens and shared the results. Of those 26 (22 %) reported they had experienced or knew someone who had been hit, slapped, shoved or other type of physical abuse. A 2009 survey showed that the state rate was 12.1 percent, while national data was one in 10.

Cell phones and social media also play into teen dating violence. The Batesville survey indicated 20 individuals had experienced or knew someone who had posted something untrue, intimate or hurtful about the partner on social media and another 48 acknowledged sending or receiving texts with threatening messages or knowing someone who did.

From their experience in meeting with teens over the past few years, the Safe Passage Prevention team believes the survey results would be similar in their six service counties, including Ohio. “Teen dating violence is very real and something that doesn’t just happen to the urban teen. Like Heather Norris (of Heather’s Law), it can happen to popular, active teens from loving and involved families,” said Samantha Santen with Safe Passage Prevention Team. She tells the young teens that no amount of violence is normal in a healthy relationship. “There are many signals beyond the obvious physical or sexual abuses many people associate with dating violence. Many abusers will attempt to manipulate emotions and control their partner’s social life long before ever laying a hand on the victim,” said Santen.

Some warning signs of abusive partners include:

- Isolating you from friends
- Calling and texting to find out where you are and with whom
- Putting you down.
- Frequently make excuses for their temper or take measures so they won’t be jealous.

To learn more about teen dating violence, go online to www.safepassageinc.org and click on Get Help. If you feel like your relationship is unhealthy, or you are currently dealing with an abusive partner, refer to the Loveisrespect.org website or text LOVEIS to 22522, call 866.331.9474.

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Safe Passage’s mission is to provide intervention services to victims of domestic violence that facilitate healing, independence and empowerment and to provide prevention and education programs that promote a safe, nurturing environment for the communities we serve.

About Teen Dating Violence...

Dating Violence is the act of controlling and/or abusive behavior in a romantic relationship. It can happen to both males and females of any race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Types of abuse include:

- Physical: Slapping, kicking, choking, spitting, punching, pinching or pushing
- Emotional/Verbal: Humiliation, intimidation, name calling, yelling, or playing mind games
- Sexual: Any forced sexual activity or sexual assault
- Only 33 percent of teens who were in a violent relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.

If you or someone you know may be in an abusive relationship, contact Safe Passage at 877- 933-1990 or the national LoveIsRespect hotline is 866.331.9474. The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).



