

Domestic Violence Memorial Service at AMH on Oct. 5

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ALTON, IL -- To shed light on domestic violence and remember the victims and their families, Alton Memorial Hospital is holding a special memorial service from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 5, in the AMH Healing Garden.

This is the seventh annual memorial service and the event is open to the community, families of domestic violence victims, school administrators, clergy, law enforcement, and state and local dignitaries. Refreshments will be served.

Featured speakers will include Madison County Circuit Judge Barbara Crowder, Associate Judge Elizabeth Levy, Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons and Alton Police Chief David Hayes. Special recognition will be given to Det. Jennifer Tierney of the Alton Police Department, a 2011 Alton YWCA Women of Distinction honoree for her work with victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. In Madison County alone during the past 15 years, 60 murders have been attributed to domestic violence. More than 1,000 women and their children every year seek help from domestic violence through the Oasis Women's Center in Alton. Oasis also serves abused men.

Because of the prevalence of domestic violence, Alton Memorial Hospital in 2002 began screening everyone 12 and older who was being assessed in the hospital. Trained staff members confidentially ask these patients if they feel safe at home or have experienced mental, physical or sexual abuse.

Alton Memorial supports a coordinated domestic violence committee that includes members from the hospital staff, Zonta Club of Alton-Wood River, Oasis Women's Center and the Third Judicial Circuit Family Violence Prevention Council.

“The hospital is very supportive of this committee,” says Judy Roth, a parish nurse at Alton Memorial and part of the planning committee for this year's service. “One in four women is abused, so the hospital realizes it's an important community health issue. We're providing a safe place with screenings and making people more aware of domestic violence.”

“Domestic violence victims are mainly women but males can be victims, too,” explains Tina Culp, an Oasis Women's Center team member and coordinator for the Third Judicial Circuit Court Family Violence Prevention Council. “Domestic violence happens to people over all economic levels and from all backgrounds.”

Culp says the worst thing to do is stay silent.

“Many victims feel ashamed, but that's the last thing they need to feel,” she says. “Domestic violence is a common problem. If you're being abused, call a professional, ideally a local shelter, where we can give you support and advice. Everything is free and confidential. You're not alone and we can help you through this process.”

The event will also include a prayer for victims, families, advocates and caregivers; music; and a display and dedication of the Clothesline Project.

In 1990, a coalition of women's groups in Massachusetts wanted to find a unique way to take statistics about violence against women and turn them into a provocative, “in-your-face” educational and healing tool. One of the women presented the concept of using shirts hanging on a clothesline as the vehicle for raising awareness. During the public display, a clothesline is hung with shirts. Each shirt is decorated to represent a particular woman's experience.

“Alton Memorial has such a forward-looking attitude toward wellness in bringing in domestic violence screenings and having events like this,” Culp says. “This event is important because we never want people to feel forgotten. It also lets the community see how ravaging the results of domestic violence are to a family. It's so dangerous to say abuse is just a private ‘family affair.’ It needs to be brought out in the open. With help, things can be changed and lives can be turned around.”