

Walking for Awareness: Fourth annual Alton Domestic Violence Walk set for Thursday

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ALTON - This year's annual Domestic Violence Awareness Walk will take place at the Liberty Bank Alton Riverfront Amphitheater on Thursday, Oct. 12 at 6:30 p.m.

The event raises awareness to the tragic issue of domestic violence, which is a problem in communities across the country. The event will start with a check-in at the amphitheater before people are transported to Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church where a presentation will be held before walkers make their ways back to the amphitheater. Each walker is asked a donation of \$10, which can be paid at the Alton Police Department before the event.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and purple is the shared color for that cause. Alton Police Chief Jason "Jake" Simmons is speaking at the event, and provided some statistics regarding the troubling epidemic early Wednesday afternoon.

"Every nine seconds in the United States, a woman is assaulted or beaten, and there are over 12 million reports of domestic violence annually, according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline," Simmons said in an email. "One in four women and one in 30 men will be the victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives."

Simmons also said as many as 13,600 children across the country are living in domestic violence shelters or transitional housing facilities in a single day as a result of abusive households. He said as many as 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence annually, according to some studies.

"We all know that children imitate what they see, thus causing another generation of abusers," Simmons said in an email. "Many abusers learned this violent behavior growing up in an abusive family or from watching television, or from seeing professional athletes and famous people battering their significant others, only to get a slap on the hand for such egregious acts, or from hearing famous people talk about the mistreatment and or the assault of women, and asserting that it is OK to speak about this because it is 'what a guy does.'"

To illustrate his assertion violence has no place in loving relationships, Simmons repeated the tagline for the walk, "love should make you blush, not make you bruise."

In 2016, the Alton Police Department responded to 574 domestic violence calls, and of that number, 55 were from intimate partner relationships. In 2017, as of Tuesday, the department has already seen 503 such calls.

"Just days ago, the Alton Police Department responded to a domestic call and arested a woman (non married intimate partner) who was later charged with aggravated battery to a child after it was learned that she had savagely beaten a six-year-old child and his two other siblings," Simmons said.

Simmons also thanked Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church for providing the space and Marquette Catholic High School for providing transportation as well as music for the event.