

Domestic Violence Memorial Service at AMH on Oct. 8

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Alison Neace, music director of Main Street United Methodist Church in Alton, sings "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" while accompanied by a trio from the Alton Symphony during the Domestic Violence Memorial Service held last October in the Alton Memorial Hospital chapel.

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. 8, in the AMH Healing Garden.

This is the 10th 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, Judge Clarence Harrison, and Alton Police Chief Jason A. Simmons. The family of domestic violence homicide victim Julie Bock will also be at the service.

Domestic violence continues to be the leading cause of injury to women. In Madison County since 1996, there have been 82 documented domestic violence-related homicides; this number comprises 44 women, 23 children and 15 men.

The number of children dying from abuse also continues to rise, and it is estimated that only one case of elder abuse is reported for every 14 unreported cases.

Because of the prevalence of domestic violence, Alton Memorial Hospital in 2002 began screening for domestic violence 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."

The event will also include prayer for victims, families, advocates and caregivers; music; and a display of the Madison County Clothesline Project from the Oasis Women's Center. The Clothesline Project serves as a vivid memorial for victims of domestic violence.

"We appreciate the administration and staff of Alton Memorial Hospital who do so much to help domestic violence victims," says Tina Culp, staff member of the Oasis Women's Center and Coordinator for the Third Judicial Circuit Family Violence Prevention Council. "This annual event is important to all of us because we must never forget those who have died as a result of abuse. We also need to let the community know the resources that are available because, with help, lives can be turned around."

If you are a victim of domestic violence and need help, call 618-465-1978.

For more information on the memorial service, please contact Tina Culp at 618-465-1978 or tinaculp@oasiswomenscenter.com.