

## The Workplace and Domestic Violence

By Christina Grier, The Supervised Visitation Program Coordinator

When we leave work at the end of the day, we strive not to bring it home with us. While we are at work; however, we are constantly reminded throughout the day of our personal lives, by calls or emails from children, partners, or extended family members. We also attempt to take care of home responsibilities while at work by scheduling doctors' appointments, taking care of pet needs, paying bills, making grocery lists, etc.

Everyday life is stressful and busy enough for the average person. Imagine if your life at home was not safe

– emotionally, physically or sexually. Imagine if your time at work was spent reliving the violence from the night before, planning how to be safe the next time, where to spend the night with your children, how to financially survive on your own, or how to leave a partner who frightens and threatens you. This is how many of our neighbors, friends, family members and co-workers spend their days at work.

With more than one million people reporting a violent assault by an intimate partner every year in the United States<sup>1</sup>, intimate partner violence (domestic violence) is everyone's business and should be a concern for every employer. Consider the following statistics:

- A 2005 national survey found that 21% of full-time employed adults were victims of domestic violence.<sup>2</sup>

- 44% of respondents to a recent survey have personally experienced domestic violence's impact on the workplace, most frequently because a co-worker was a victim.<sup>3</sup>
- One study found that over 75% of domestic violence perpetrators used workplace resources to express remorse or anger towards, check up on, pressure, or threaten their victim.<sup>4</sup>
- One study of female domestic violence victims found that 44% were left without transportation when the abuser disabled their car or hid their car keys, inhibiting their ability to attend work.<sup>5</sup>

Domestic violence affects employee health and safety, decreases productivity, and increases employer health care costs. The following are examples of the impact on workplaces:

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## 2008 Legislative Wrap-up

By Kerri Duquette-Hoffman, Advocacy Program Coordinator

This year was an extraordinarily active legislative session in Vermont concerning domestic violence (DV)- related initiatives. Many legislators devoted a great amount of time and energy learning about domestic violence in Vermont, including how to better create safety for those who experience DV, accountability for those who perpetrate DV and effective community responses to DV. Much of this work is captured in Act 174, An Act Relating to Domestic Violence, which went into effect on July 1, 2008. Some of the highlights of this exciting legislation are as follows:

- Increases the maximum penalty for domestic assault from 12 months to 18 months
- Makes it a crime to interfere with a person's attempt to access emergency services
- Implements mandatory training for all law enforcement personnel on domestic violence
- Makes it easier to obtain Relief From Abuse orders when the defendant is incarcerated
- Allows for emergency requests of custody considerations when the safety of the child is in jeopardy.
- Eliminates the 12 month waiting period for victims of domestic violence to access state based health care
- Provides new funding for state-wide initiatives for prevention work.

Several other important Vermont bills related to violence against women were passed this session. One of these

was Act 136, which was the result of last year's study of the state's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program. This bill creates a full time position to coordinate the SANE program in Vermont, and creates an advisory board for the SANE program. Another, Act 173, increases access to Victim's Compensation to reimburse health care providers who have provided treatment to a person who has experienced a violent crime.

The hard work of our legislators shows very clearly when reviewing these bills. Many thanks to all of them!

To read all the Acts in their entirety, please go to:  
[www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/acts.cfm?Session=2008](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/acts.cfm?Session=2008)

To find a Vermont legislator, please go to:  
[www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/legdir2.htm](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/legdir2.htm)

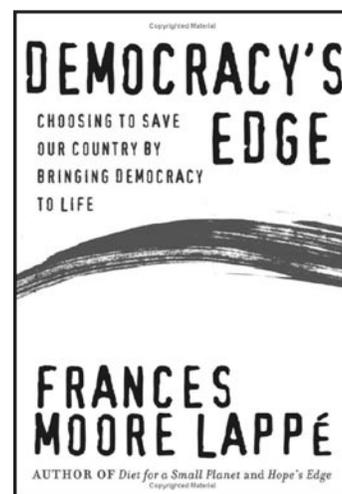
## Book Review of Democracy's Edge

By Jason Duquette-Hoffman, Community Member

*Democracy's Edge*, by Frances Moore Lappé, is a call to arms for the disenchanted activist. While it may not convince a dedicated conservative reader, it is a refreshing and upbeat reminder, while decidedly left-leaning, that we, as individuals, can make a difference in preserving and promoting our democracy.

Lappé cites numerous examples of grassroots activism and advocacy to demonstrate the power of people and communities who believe that they can effect change. She rails against the corporate consolidation of media and two-party rule as part and parcel

of a persistent march by those in positions of power to wrest true control and political power from the people to the hands of the few and privileged. The power of *Democracy's Edge* comes not from its careful and studied analysis of the steady loss by the populace of political control, nor from its cheery recitations of feel-good anecdotes about small people making a big difference, but rather from its simple reminder to the reader that more can be done. To the reader, Lappé says in essence that all is not lost, nor is it morally permissible to merely throw up our hands and sit idly by whilst control of our land, policy and people is handed over to those whose interests are not our own. As those of you reading this are engaged in thinking about issues of domestic and sexual violence, it may go without saying that absent true democracy, social change is elusive at best.



Neither the examples, nor the sentiment in the book are new, nor are they particularly singular in their ingenuity. What Lappé does and, in my opinion, does well, is to couch an activist's guilt trip in the language of opportunity. If recent events have spurred you to reject your activist tendencies in favor of complacency, *Democracy's Edge* may well be the fresh cup of coffee you need to get back on the wagon.

# The Unintended Impact of Minimum Sentencing for Sex Offenders

By Foresta Castañeda, Outreach Advocate

In the aftermath of the brutal kidnapping and murder of Brooke Bennett, Vermonters and legislators alike have sprung into action calling for tougher penalties and increased monitoring of sex offenders in our state. It is important for us to take a moment to step back and ask: How will these proposed laws impact the people who experience these crimes? Will the laws create an environment in which people will feel safe coming forward to report? Will the laws hold perpetrators accountable while taking into account the safety and needs of those who were violated?

According to the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence website, "in 99% of rape incidents reported to Vermont police, the victim and accused knew each other, and in 25% of these cases, the victim and accused were either family members or intimate partners." If Vermont enacted legislation requiring mandatory minimum sentencing, more cases would go to trial rather than a defendant pleading guilty in a plea agreement. In cases where the victim knows the perpetrator, the victim may be less likely to come forward knowing that her/his family member or intimate partner may be sentenced to a long jail term. Many more victims, including minors, would be put in the position of needing to testify in court, re-living the horrors of the violence perpetrated against them. For victims who do not feel safe testifying, or for parents who do not wish to have their minor child testify at trial, this could result in acquittal or in charges being dropped due to lack of evidence. In these cases, there would be absolutely no accountability for the perpetrator.

As we move forward with public hearings, discussion and legislation, it is important to think about the impact that new legislation will have on the people who experience these crimes and to work with, and not against, them in creating legislation that ensures accountability while encouraging victims to come forward.

# Accountability for Bystanders

By Willow Wheelock,  
Children & Youth Services  
Coordinator

Domestic violence is in every community: our sisters, coworkers, friends and neighbors experience the abuse and controlling behaviors of their partners. While this abuse often happens behind closed doors, it does not stay behind closed doors; it seeps out of a home and into our schools, workplaces, streets and front yards. It affects all of us and it affects our community. Domestic violence is everybody's business and everyone can respond to it in ways that can make a difference.

If you know someone who is experiencing abuse or violence, you can provide a confidential listening ear; tell your friend the abuse is not her fault; point out excuses that are made about the abusive partner's behavior, and continue to be there for your friend even if she doesn't leave the relationship. If you know someone who is controlling, abusive or violent towards his partner, children and/or pets, let him know that you have noticed his behavior and tell him you're concerned about it. Point out excuses he makes for his behavior, offer to help him find resources that will support him in treating his partner with respect and equality (Domestic Abuse Education Program), refrain from responding to your friend in an aggressive, physical manner, as this only reinforces his abusive behavior.

Other ways for everyone to join in the efforts of addressing and ending domestic (and sexual) violence are to challenge sexist language and jokes

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## For more information about the unintended consequences of mandatory minimum sentencing for victims please visit:

- The Vermont Network to End Domestic and Sexual Violence:  
[www.vtnetwork.org](http://www.vtnetwork.org)
- The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence:  
[www.naesv.org](http://www.naesv.org)
- Rutland Herald: "Victims come first," Editorial, July 9, 2008  
[www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080709/NEWS/807090319/1038/OPINION01](http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080709/NEWS/807090319/1038/OPINION01)
- Addison Independent: Officials explain Vermont's sex offender registry, submitted on August 4, 2008, By Lee J. Kahrs  
[www.addisonindependent.com/node/1468](http://www.addisonindependent.com/node/1468)

# WomenSafe's Statement on a Green Work Environment

By Naomi Smith,  
Executive Director

Ecofeminism is a feminist way of being that values everybody and everything. We believe that women and all people require respect for their participation in their relationships and in the world. It seems to follow that if we also believe in peace and equality, we must also be respectful to the earth, all things living and the things that someone somewhere spent much time and energy creating. Ecofeminism is an ideal worth exploring and one which is important to WomenSafe. The following is a list of some of the things that we are doing to lessen our footprint on this earth:

- recycle, reuse, compost
- take toxic refuse to the solid waste facility
- buy fair trade coffee and recycled paper products
- buy local
- use reusable shopping bags
- keep plants in our work space to clean the air and absorb some of the computer radiation while adding oxygen to the air
- use natural non-toxic fertilizers, cleaning products and pest deterrents
- increased the gardens and added more bushes in our yard to provide safe screening for visitors while creating a more welcoming and healthier environment
- use a hand-powered rotary lawn mower for our small patch of grass
- bring our lunch to work in reusable plastic/glass containers
- wash dishes and silverware in the office and at events rather than using disposable products
- use natural air fresheners
- walk, ride bicycles, carpool or use the ACTR bus to and from work, trainings and meetings
- support staff volunteerism
- participate in cow power
- use compact florescent light bulbs
- have a new insulated water heater
- prefer fresh air to air conditioning
- use timer-type thermostats to manage the heat
- clean the furnace and air conditioners annually
- respond regularly to junk and catalog mail to be taken off of mail lists
- do on-line banking and bill paying
- moving toward a paperless system of documentation

Some of these things have saved us many dollars - a few have cost us more, but in the end we are supporting our local businesses, bringing more awareness to the issues of domestic and sexual violence in our community while doing our best to protect our earth and promote peace in our community.



## Shaw's Receipt Rewards

WomenSafe would like to extend our immense gratitude to all of the organizations and individuals who have sent in their Shaw's receipts. You have sent us over \$80,000 in receipts, which has resulted in over \$800 of Shaw's Rewards that we have used to purchase emergency food for women and their children who are fleeing a violent partner.

Please consider donating your Shaw's receipts to WomenSafe or combine your receipts with others in your workplace or neighborhood. It is an easy and affordable way to make a donation - every little bit counts! Simply place all collected receipts in an envelope and mail to: PO Box 67, Middlebury, VT 05753.

## Thank you to the RSVP volunteers

The RSVP volunteers spend several hours getting over 2,000 newsletters ready for mailing. We couldn't get this information out to our readers without their help. We appreciate all their hard work and dedication! A special thank you to Helen Ryan who coordinates the biannual work of the RSVP volunteers for WomenSafe.

## The Advocate

WomenSafe does not necessarily share the opinions expressed by the writers and reserves the right to edit and determine the content of *The Advocate*.

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## Donate to Neat Repeats!

If you have gently used clothes and/or household items, you can donate them to Neat Repeats and designate WomenSafe as the recipient of the proceeds. For more information, call us at 388-9180 or Neat Repeats at 388-4488.

## Comments Welcome

We would like to hear what you think about the newsletter. Please send your comments, questions and responses to [info@womensafe.net](mailto:info@womensafe.net) or call us at 388-9180. Thank you again for your continued support.

## WomenSafe

### 24-hour Hotline:

388-4205 or  
800-388-4205

### WomenSafe, Inc.

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[www.womensafe.net](http://www.womensafe.net)

office: 388-9180

fax: 388-3438

The Supervised Visitation Program

@ WomenSafe

(The SVP): 388-6783

- Advocacy Services  
(Free & Confidential)
  - 24-hour Hotline
  - Information & Referrals
  - Emotional Support
  - Medical Advocacy
  - Legal Advocacy
  - Systems Advocacy
  - Support Groups
- Community Outreach & Education
- Supervised Visitation & Monitored Exchange



The following was written by a young man in high school.

## "my silence"

He is my friend  
i don't want to be involved  
i don't know Him good enough  
i am not His family

He is so nice to me  
to everybody

i don't know for sure  
i don't know if it is  
happening

i am not sure  
not sure  
not sure that He  
beats her up  
leaves bruises on her  
abuses her  
sexual  
physical  
intimidates her  
threatens her  
humiliates her  
rapes her  
i am not sure

He is my friend  
i don't want to lose him  
He seems so nice  
i don't believe it  
i am just a friend  
i am afraid

i can't interfere  
it is His privacy

i saw the news today  
i saw my friend  
He killed her  
beat her to death  
raped her  
my friend

i might have said something  
but it was His privacy

now I am sure  
i am sure  
i am sure it was her mind  
her body  
my silence

*Reprinted with permission from "Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships: What You Need to Know" last revision 2007.*

# What is Domestic Violence?

By Kristy, a Survivor

Don't tell, not a word, don't speak of the violence you've endured,

Only you can make it stop by asking for help or filing a complaint, and holding back with great restraint.

More women are afraid to cry out for help due to the fact that they could get hurt.....

Each year women and children die at the hands of a loved one they could not escape.....

So many don't know there are different kinds of abuse until it's too late and you've no where to turn,

To educate others and stand up for yourself and your children could save a life if we help one another.....

I am a survivor of this overlooked crime because so many don't know where to go to seek and find people who have dealt with this pain of the same kind.....

Comfort takes time, and at times you may feel that no one will ever understand why you stayed so long.....

Victims are silent, sometimes never heard for fear of the abuser turning their words,

Innocence is lost at such a young age because they do not know this disease is not just physical.....

One voice, speak out; help those who can not help themselves

Let it out, talk about it with people you can trust. Your voice needs to be heard so make some noise and help those who are afraid to express their feelings.

Even though they make you believe they are not the abuser, but the shoe is on the other foot.

Never let anyone take you for granted and make you feel that you ever deserved what you have been given..... never your fault.

Choose wisely and look closely when your heart trusts again... set limits and boundaries and don't cross that line because,

Even someone who's been abused deserves to find love when it's time,

So never forget, never look back, but watch for the warnings, watch for the signs and remember it takes a bigger person to learn to forgive.

## Accountability for Bystanders *continued*

that degrade women, hang awareness posters in your workplace, school or place of worship and educate yourself about why some men are violent.

We all have a stake in addressing domestic violence and working to make every home a safe home; take a step, take a stand, do your part now and together, we can and will make our community safer.

For information about how men can get involved, please see:

"It is Men's Job to Curb Violence Against Women," by Stephen McArthur and Ron Redmond, July 16, 2008, Rutland Herald

[www.RutlandHerald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008807160320](http://www.RutlandHerald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008807160320)

[www.whiteribbonvt.org](http://www.whiteribbonvt.org)



## The Workplace and Domestic Violence

*continued*

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence equals \$727.8 million.<sup>6</sup>
- The national health care costs of domestic violence (often absorbed by employers) are high, with direct medical and mental health care services for victims amounting to \$4.1 billion.<sup>7</sup>
- Employers who fail to protect their employees may be liable. Jury awards for inadequate security suits average \$1.2 million nationwide and settlements average \$600,000.<sup>8</sup>

Employers can take a leadership role by reviewing their human resource and workplace policies to ensure they recognize and assist those who are experiencing abuse. Policies should clearly address perpetrator's behaviors, such as making it clear that using company e-mail or phones to threaten or harass victims is against company policy. Zero tolerance policies offer protection and security to those who are experiencing abuse and make our workplaces and communities safer places to live and work.

Tips for making the workplace safer for employees who are experiencing

abuse at home:

- Ask what changes could be made to make the employee feel safer.
- Leave literature in bathrooms where the employee might feel more comfortable picking it up.
- Make arrangements to have priority parking near the building.
- Have calls screened, transferring harassing calls to security, or have the employee's name removed from automated phone directories.
- Relocate the employee's workspace to a more secure area or another site.
- Encourage the employee to save threatening emails or voice mails. These can potentially be used for future legal action or can serve as evidence that an existing Relief From Abuse order was violated.
- Identify an emergency contact person should the employer be unable to contact the employee.

It is crucial that domestic violence be seen as a serious, recognizable, and preventable problem like thousands of other workplace health and safety issues that affect a business. People who experience violence need workplaces that respond to their needs and batterers need employers who hold them accountable for their actions. Employers who get involved can make a difference. Taking some simple steps

is more than caring – it is in the interest of business.

Information for this article and much more about domestic violence and the workplace can be found on the following websites:

[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)  
[www.endabuse.org/workplace/](http://www.endabuse.org/workplace/)

For information about how businesses of all sizes can take steps to address these issues, including sample policies, please go to:

[www.endabuse.org/workplace/](http://www.endabuse.org/workplace/)

1. "Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States." 2003. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control. Atlanta, GA.
2. "The Survey of Workplace Violence Prevention." October, 2006. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
3. Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence. 2007. "Workplace Statistics." [http://www.caepv.org/getinfo/facts\\_stats.php?factsec=3](http://www.caepv.org/getinfo/facts_stats.php?factsec=3)
4. Ibid.
5. "The Facts on the Workplace and Domestic Violence Against Women." 2007. Family Violence Prevention Fund.
6. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. March, 2003. "Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States." Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
7. Ibid.
8. Perry, P. (1994). "Assault in the Workplace." *Law*, May 1, 41.

**"I think even just a poster in the bathroom at work would make me know that I wasn't going to be completely off the mark. If I knew somebody cared enough to hang a poster like that, I would have felt a little better about saying something, in my present job"**

■ *A Survivor*

# WomenSafe

Committed to ending  
domestic and sexual violence

# The Advocate

Newsletter of WomenSafe

Volume 13, Issue 2, Fall 2008

## WomenSafe Provides:

- Advocacy Services  
(Free & Confidential)
  - 24-hour Hotline
  - Information & Referrals
  - Emotional Support
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fax: 388-3438

The Supervised  
Visitation Program

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