

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abusers choose violence

I was quoted in an article about domestic violence and its possible connection to the Super Bowl (ODE, Jan. 30). This isn't an easy issue to sum up in a short article, and I would like to correct and clarify some information that was reported.

Womenspace, along with the battered women's movement, defines domestic violence as: tactics, including emotional, sexual, physical and financial violence, used to gain and maintain power and control over a partner. Domestic violence is about control; it is not about being out of control. When an abuser abuses, he or she makes a choice to do so. Therefore, domestic violence is not the result of alcohol consumption, anger mismanagement, testosterone or stress (or football).

As a result of the silence of

victims of domestic violence, it is impossible to quantify the incidence of domestic violence. The only way to attempt to do so is to count calls to crisis lines, numbers of batterers arrested, number of 911 calls involving domestic violence, number of women killed in a day, month or year in domestic violence situations, etc.

One could only attempt to quantify domestic violence incidents on a certain day, let's say Super Bowl Sunday, by counting the numbers. The reporter of the article chose to count the number of calls to the Womenspace crisis line. The problem with this is that even if the number of calls to the crisis line go up on a certain day (which they did not on Super Bowl Sunday in Eugene) can we really say that there were more incidents of domestic violence on that day than any other day? No, because we have to take the awareness factor into consideration. Are peo-

ple in Lane County more aware of domestic violence and available services than people in other communities are? We, at Womenspace, hope so; there has been a county-wide awareness media campaign going on since last October.

In conclusion, please do not continue to believe that anger, alcohol, stress, etc. cause domestic violence because they do not. Domestic violence is caused by the choice that abusers make to control their partners. I was misquoted on the most important question that we need to be asking ourselves about domestic violence. That question is not, "Why doesn't she just leave the relationship?" but instead is, "Why does someone believe that they can use violent tactics to control their partner? And what does that say about our society?"

Tonya Valadez
Schools program coordinator,
Womenspace

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