October is Domestic Violence Awareness (Action) Month

■ By Teresa Clyne
Programs for Peaceful Living

Domestic violence affects millions of people each year and has far-reaching consequences for those experiencing it, their families, and their communities.

"The purpose of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is to mourn those lost to abuse, celebrate survivors, and network for change," said Sarah Fader in an article published by the mental health website betterhelp.com. Each year, the focus in October helps connect advocates with their communities, working to end violence within the home.

Domestic violence is a serious problem that affects many families and does not only refer to physical violence; it also takes into account threats, unwanted visits and phone calls, insults, forced sex, and taking financial control.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey from the CDC shows that 20 people per minute experience physical violence by an intimate partner in the U.S. on average. Estimates suggest that domestic violence from an intimate partner affects everyone of all gender and sexual identities. One in four women and one in seven men will experience physical violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives, and 45 million children are affected annually by domestic violence.

One major problem those working to end domestic violence face is that people know that domestic violence is common but don't know what to do if they suspect someone is experiencing it. Unfortunately, many survivors do not seek medical care for the injuries and are afraid to leave their current situation.

The solution is to share ways everyone can participate in the Domestic Violence Awareness campaign:

1. Wear purple — The purple ribbon is considered a unifying symbol of courage, survival, honor, and dedication to ending domestic violence. Supporters can also wear a purple t-shirt or accessories like bracelets or necklaces to create awareness.

2. Launch a public awareness campaign — It can be as complex as organizing a large-scale event to something simple like coordinating a flash mob or volunteering to man a booth at a community event. (Ask Programs for Peaceful Living for more ideas.)

3. Spread the word — This is the perfect time to create awareness and start a conversation about domestic violence. You can spread the word in many ways, like connecting with the media or using social media to inform people about the importance of domestic violence awareness.

4. Volunteer — It may be less obvious, but it is an equally impactful way to show your support and that you care. Volunteers can make a difference in the lives of people who experience domestic violence.

5. Share your story — If you have been affected by domestic violence, sharing your story can inspire someone else to get the help they need. Sharing your story can also help people who have not experienced domestic violence firsthand realize how important it is to rally for change.

If you are experiencing domestic violence, there are many available resources to help you find a way out of the situation and provide ongoing support while you heal. You can be connected with personal advocacy assistance, support groups, and online counseling services by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

The National Hotline will also connect you to a local Crime Victim Service Center like Programs for Peaceful Living. For more information about crisis services and community resources in Klickitat County, call 509-493-2662 and ask for the Programs for Peaceful Living office in either Goldendale or Bingen. Office hours are Monday through Thursday and Fridays by appointment. One-on-one advocacy and support group services are currently conducted by phone and by zoom for the health and safety of both clients and staff.

If you are in crisis, contact the 24/7 Crisis Line at 844-493-1709.

HRCSD school board adjusts board meeting protocols

The board of directors for Hood River County School District (HRCSD) have adjusted two protocols for school board meetings. The school district will implement these revised protocols on Wednesday, Oct. 13, when the board is scheduled to meet at 6:30 p.m. at the Nathaniel Coe Administration Center.

HRCSD will limit capacity for in-person attendance. The capacity will be calculated based on the size of the meeting venue. An important part of the formula will be meeting the standards outlined in the district's COVID-19 protocols, including physical distancing. Participation in board meetings has been higher than expected this school year, said a press release. Due to the number of people attending and the risks behind large groups gathering indoors, limiting the capacity of in-person attendance is prudent. Board meetings will continue to be live streamed for virtual observation. Mask wearing is required indoors at all times, including at HRCSD school board meetings.

HRCSD will continue to provide opportunities for public comment; however, it made two changes to its protocols. Individuals who want to offer public comment must sign up in advance of the meeting. The sign up window is between the end of the preceding meeting and 2 p.m. the day before the meeting at which the individual wants to offer public comment. Public comment sign-ups will not be available at the meeting. Individuals who sign up to offer public comment will be provided the choice to attend the meeting in person or virtually to give their comments. This practice fulfills HB2560, which goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2022, and "requires oral and written testimony to be accepted by electronic or virtual means if this testimony would otherwise be accepted in the meeting."

Individuals who want to provide public comment may reach out to the district office administrative assistant, Meghan West, at meghan.west@hoodriver.k12.or.us. West will reach out to individuals who sign up to speak the day of the meeting to make arrangements.

These practices will be implemented on Wednesday, Oct. 13, and all following school board meetings unless future events dictate a re-evaluation.

Standing Tall

Hood River Valley High School cheerleaders perform during Friday's game in The Dalles Oct .9. Mark B. Gibson photo