

A Look at Domestic Violence

By Chief Rod Mendoza, Parker Police Department

This is one of four articles on "Violence against Women" in our community. The second article will discuss "Stalking" and the violence associated towards the victims. The third article will cover sexual assaults in our community. The fourth article will discuss "Protective orders."

Part 1 of 4

This is the first of four articles concerning "Violence against Women" in our community.

These articles are for the intention of informing the public on how prevalent Domestic violence is within our community.

Domestic violence is not about a perpetrator's anger issues but is about one person's ability to establish and maintain power control over another person. The abuser is extremely well versed in the ability to masquerade his violence from friends, coworkers and family.

However, whenever alone with the victim the abuser becomes demanding, controlling, demeaning which usually over time turns violent. The abuser does a good job at keeping the victim isolated from anyone outside of their immediate family; they have no one to turn to for help for fear of embarrassment, ridicule or self-blame.

Recently the Parker Police Department responded to a call for help from a woman who was arguing with a man she was living with. He picked up their television set and threw it striking her in the face. He then picked up and threw a metal rod at her. When she tried calling the police he hit the phone out of her hand. This is one of many cases of domestic violence within our community.

Many cases involve physical injuries but more times than not the emotional injuries are just as intense. Several recent cases consisted of a man who pushed his wife out of a moving car, other women suffered stab wounds, punched about the face, kicked in the head or stomach and strangled. Unfortunately too many of these incidents have occurred in front of their children.

Violence against women occurs daily in our community and many times go unreported for a myriad amount of reasons. Many of these crimes are witnessed by relatives and friends but they chose not to report or take any action because they do not want to get involved. Most violence against women or domestic violence usually does not start with a punch or a kick; it starts through the use of "power and control" methods.

Domestic violence is primarily about controlling the other person, through force or fear. The control may start as simply as demanding the other person to be accountable for

their time; how long it takes to get from work to home, how long they talk on the phone, who they talk with, and any time away from home. The abuser manipulates events and eventually refuses to allow social time with friends and then keeps the person away from family members.

Once the abuser has control over money, time, friends and family then the physical violence usually occurs. After the first physical altercation the abuser will convince the victim no one cares about them or that they are useless and no one could love them except the abuser.

Sometimes the violence may suddenly become explosive when the victim who is in an abusive relationship refuses to believe or recognize the symptoms. These women will eventually find themselves being punched, stabbed, or may even have a television thrown at them. Many times after assaulting the victim the abusers will apologize, promise never to do it again and even cry while professing how much they love them.

The physically injuries are sometime minor as compared to the emotional scars inflicted upon the victim and to the children who witness these attacks. Anyone who finds themselves in an abusive relationship should know their pain can stop and help is available.

If you know someone who is in an abusive relationship sometimes just saying "I'm afraid for you, is there anything I can do to help?" will go a long way in that victim possibly taking the first step to leave.

In our community we are fortunate to have the Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter. They have trained staff who will answer questions; provide counseling and provide emergency shelter if necessary. Phone calls are strictly confidential. When you call for assistance, advice or information your identity will be protected.

If someone needs help or just wants some questions answered, please call their hotline number at 1-888-499-0911, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Again, the purposes of these articles are to elevate awareness, inform and educate our community to these types of crimes and how to protect you, a friend or family member. For further information please contact the Parker Police Department at (918) 669-2264.

Violence against women -- stalking

By Chief Rod Mendoza, Parker Police Department

Part 2 of 4

Domestic violence occurs daily in our community and we should not ignore this crisis especially if the victim is a friend, sister, mother or daughter. The domestic violence abuser obtains power through the control they impose over their victim. This type of power and control eventually results in physical assaults. However, in the case of stalking it may be weeks, months or even years to see the scars inflicted upon their victims.

In most communities stalking can be easily dismissed by the general public unless you are the one being stalked. Stalking is another method the abuser can utilize to "control" the victim's life after their relationship has ended. The Parker Police Department has investigated cases where the stalker would continuously telephone, leave voice mails or text messages during all hours of the day and night.

The stalker will tell their victims how they cannot live without them in their life and will do anything to restart the relationship. When the stalker's advances are denied by the victim the stalker may start calling and leave threatening messages.

Stalkers have also been known to spread rumors about their victims with the intent of slandering their reputation to gain sympathy from mutual friends and family members. Victims have also reported seeing their ex-partner parked in a car outside her home or work place for hours at a time. Stalkers generally show up at community events where they know the victim will be attending and will approach and contact the victim in public places such as a grocery store or parking lot.

The police department has also investigated cases where video cameras were used as visual and listening devices or other technical devices to track victims.

Stalking is a crime and is not a role out of a movie where the relationship ends and he wins her back by continually coming to her work, calling her on the phone or texting until she agrees to talk to him. When the relationship is over, one party needs to clearly state to the other person to leave them alone, do not call or contact them for any reason. If possible, do this in the presence of a third party.

Stalking is a felony in the State of Arizona and defined as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Individuals must have feared for their safety or that of a family member as a result of the course of conduct, or have experienced additional threatening behaviors.

13-2923 ARS: Stalking; classification; definitions. A person commits stalking if the person intentionally or knowingly engages in a course of conduct that is directed toward

another person and if that conduct would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety. "Course of conduct" means maintaining visual or physical proximity to a specific person or directing verbal, written or other threats, whether express or implied, to a specific person on two or more occasions over a period of time, however short, but does not include constitutionally protected activity.

Although women were at greater risk than men for stalking victimization; women and men were equally likely to experience harassment.

If these events are occurring in your life and you actually find it disturbing or frightening then you may be a victim of stalking. There is a fine line between romantic pursuit and stalking behavior. The only person who can say when that line has been crossed is the person being pursued. What one person calls romantic, another may call harassing.

People who are being stalked often don't do anything to help themselves because they feel overwhelmed or even embarrassed of the situation. This is exactly what the stalker wants, for you to feel helpless. Do not surrender control over your life to the stalker, this is what he wants; you will have to take action to stop it.

Depending upon the severity of the stalking, victims suffered a range of emotions as they experienced stalking. The most common fears cited by victims were not knowing what would happen next and being afraid the behavior would never stop. Victims reported that they had lost time from work because of fear for their safety or to pursue activities such as getting a restraining order or testifying in court.

If you believe you are a stalking victim please notify the Parker Police Department to make a report, ask for protection and assistance. With the advancement of technology, stalking has changed. Stalkers keep finding new ways to harass their victims. Currently, text messaging and emails and GPS capabilities on your cell phone are emerging as one of the most commonly used means of harassment. Victims should save all messages or threats left on your answering machine or voicemail and keep a log of all contacts made by stalker.

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This is the second of four articles on "Violence against Women" in our community. The Third article will discuss will cover sexual assaults in our community. The fourth article will discuss "Protective orders."

Again, the purposes of these articles are to elevate awareness, inform and educate our community to these types of crimes and how to protect you, a friend or family member.

For further information please contact the Parker Police Department at (918) 669-2264.

Additional references are:

DOJ, Department of Justice, www.OJP.USDOJ.GOV

IACP, International Chiefs of Police, www.IACP.org.

Violence against Women: The consequences of "sexting"

By Rod Mendoza, Parker Police Chief

Part 3 of 4

The primary purpose of these articles on violence against women in our community is to inform and educate and with the hopes of prevention. Rape, date rape and other forms of sexual assaults occur in our community. These issues do need to be addressed but currently we have a new assault that is preying upon our young women and teenagers - "sexting."

Text sex is text messages of sexual acts and other sexual things along with nude or semi-nude photos. Anyone with an active text-capable cell phone, and especially video capabilities, can participate. Unfortunately, we have investigated teenage girls sending nude or semi-nude photos of themselves to their boyfriends or friends through the use of their cell phones. Our department became aware of this problem last year when a high school girl took nude photos of herself, sent them to her boyfriend, who then shared them with a large group of friends.

Another serious issue about text messages or pictures is that anyone can see them, reputations can be ruined and the teens can become publicly humiliated. These young teenagers do not stop to think that their photos become "a picture that will last a lifetime." The problem expands when these photos are posted on the web through Facebook, YouTube or MySpace.

Parents need to stay in touch and in control of their teenagers. As a parent it is your duty to protect and help prevent your children from making poor decisions. Parents should make sure their kids fully understand the messages or pictures they send over the Internet on their cell phones are not private or anonymous and should assume their messages will be shared among people they do not know or want to see them.

The teenagers we spoke with regarding sending or possessing sex messages or photos did not understand the "big deal" about the issue until we told them it may be a criminal offense to send or possess sex photos; sexual exploitation of a minor is a serious

felony.

These types of acts or other types of violence against women usually start in small increments, where incidents appear to be minor in nature and "everyone is doing it" attitude. However, sex-texting is sending the wrong message to our youth. Text sex, date rape and other sexual assaults are serious crimes that are occurring against women in our community. We need to educate and inform both our young women and men the possible results of their actions; they need to be told the expectations of appropriate electronic behavior.

Sex-texting may become the new precursor to date rape and other forms of sexual assaults. Parents and community members can take a strong stand against all types of violence against women by remaining informed and educated on the signs and symptoms of abuse and reporting it to the proper authorities.

The fourth article will discuss protective orders. The purposes of these articles are to elevate awareness, inform and educate our community to these types of crimes and how to protect you, a friend or family member. For further information please contact the Parker Police Department at 928-669-2264.

Violence against Women: Date Rape

By Rod Mendoza, Parker Police Chief

Part 4 of 4

The primary purpose of these articles on Violence against Women in our community is to inform, educate and to help prevent these crimes from occurring. One specific act of violence against women especially among teenage girls in our community is in the form of "date rape."

Recently the Parker Police Department investigated a series of sexual assaults on teenagers committed by older teenagers during overnight parties. These teenage girls between the ages of 14 to 16 would tell their parents they were spending the night at a friend's house and would actually be attending a party or be at a home where the parents are out of town. At these parties large groups of juveniles gather and usually consume alcohol which leads to other forms of criminal activity.

One investigation lead to an arrest of a 19-year-old male who made it a habit of "partying" or hanging out with 14- to 16-year-old teenage girls and then molest them or

have sex with them. Alcohol was usually consumed during these criminal encounters.

One 14-year-old girl told us the 19-year-old tried to kiss her but she refused his advances. She told our investigators later that night she got alcohol poisoning but doesn't think anything sexually happened between her and the 19-year-old.

In another case a teenage girl was actually carried out of the house where she was attending a party and assaulted by an older teenager.

All of these types of sexual assaults were committed by acquaintances of the victims. In a majority of the cases the girls' judgment was impaired due to the consumption of alcohol or they were in a different house or location from where they told their parents they would be. These items falsely lead the victims into believing they were at fault or they were too scared or embarrassed to talk to their parents about the incidents.

Parents, take the time to talk to your teenagers regarding how to protect themselves when out and about. Alcohol and illegal substance abuse are usually the gateway to sexual assaults. Inform your teenager to be extra alert whenever they see a person 19-years-old or older hanging out with 14- to 16-year-old girls.

One method to help teenagers stay safe is to use the buddy system whenever they are out with a group of friends. The girls can become accountable to each other throughout the night.

Teenagers should understand the importance of talking to their parents, asking questions and discussing concerns as they occur. Unfortunately teenagers sometimes believe they must obey parents' rules because "I said so" but in reality parents just want to protect their children from events that will rob an innocence that can never be replaced.

Domestic violence, Stalking, Sex-texting and Date rapes are serious forms of "Violence against Women" that occur in our community. Fortunately, we have the Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter to help mitigate these crimes. They have trained staff who will answer questions; provide counseling and provide emergency shelter if necessary.

Phone calls are strictly confidential. When you call for assistance, advice or information your identity will be protected. If someone needs help or just wants some questions answered, please call their hotline number at 1-888-499-0911, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This is part four of four articles on "Violence against Women" in our community. During the next few weeks I will have an additional article that will discuss "Protective orders."

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