**Newsletter Article for Faith Community Newsletters:**

**February is Dating Violence Awareness Month**

“Dating” has changed a lot over the years. Online apps, texting, and social media… even the term “dating” may not be relevant. Young people now use different words to describe “dating”: “hanging out,” “talking,” “just friends,” or “casual”. Regardless of what our young adults are calling their relationships, one thing has not changed: *a healthy relationship is built on mutual love, respect, and trust.*

Unfortunately, any relationship can become unhealthy, or even violent, regardless of whether that relationship is casual or serious.

February is **Dating Violence Awareness Month** and now is a great opportunity to learn more so that we can help to keep young people in our congregations and communities safe. Dating violence is a form of abuse that can be verbal, emotional, physical, financial, sexual, or spiritual. Every year, 1.5 million teens are abused by people they are dating or used to date. Even though this problem is so widespread, only a third of teens ever disclose their abuse. Additionally, violent relationships during teenage years put young adults at higher risk of substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and more domestic violence later in life.

We would like to think abuse doesn’t happen in our congregation, but the truth is that dating violence can happen in any congregation. We all have a critical role to play in supporting survivors of abuse. Understanding how to support our young adults lovingly and in non-judgmental ways will help us maintain the connection they need to feel comfortable reaching out for help.

Please share with others in our congregation about your ideas, and contact our local domestic violence services agency, NAME OF LOCAL DV AGENCY and NUMBER HERE to learn more. You can also learn more about how to support victims of dating violence [**here**.](https://www.interfaithpartners.org/victims-of-dating-violence)

*If you are in immediate danger, call 911.  If you or someone you know may be experiencing domestic or dating violence, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or visit* [*https://www.loveisrespect.org/*](https://www.loveisrespect.org/)*. For resources about faith and domestic violence, visit* [*http://www.interfaithpartners.org/dvfaith*](http://www.interfaithpartners.org/dvfaith)*.*