

Press Release

Grand County Men Break The Silence

A diverse group of 40 Grand County men, united in their belief that men are key to ending domestic violence, are publishing posters and newspaper ads with the message that domestic violence is never acceptable. The group, operating under the name Grand County Men Against Domestic Violence (GCMADV) and the tagline "Strong Men Don't Hurt Women", hopes this effort will bring more awareness of the problem and bring more men into the effort to end domestic violence.

The text of the posters and ads is short: "Grand County men work hard and play hard. We have stresses and challenges. Even in the toughest of times, we never—ever—hit or abuse the women in our lives. STRONG MEN DON'T HURT WOMEN!"

The posters and ads are unique in that they include a photo of each GCMADV member. "This is not an anonymous campaign but real community leaders and members, young and old, from all parts of the county, putting their names and faces to the cause," said Rich Devlin, the group's organizer.

Domestic violence is widely viewed as a women's issue because the vast majority of victims are women and because women are leading the effort to end domestic violence. Where are the men?

"Men tend not to get involved—to stay silent. So perpetrators think—'it must be OK to abuse my wife because my buddies aren't saying anything.' The unfortunate reality is that men's silence has been construed as implied approval. GCMADV wants to change this dynamic," said Devlin.

The diverse list of GCMADV members had different reasons for joining. Roger Hedlund, long time local Fraser resident and owner of Home James Transportation Services, joined because he believes that men's involvement could help increase community awareness and education about domestic violence. Shane Hale, Grand Lake Town Manager, joined because he found out about GCMADV on the date of his fifth wedding anniversary. He said, "it is a great way to honor my wife and our marriage by joining the group."

Did anyone say no? Very few, according to Devlin. One small business owner didn't want to take a position on what he thought was a contentious issue. Devlin's take: "OK, we're not talking about Barak Obama or Sarah Palin posters, here; we're talking about criminal assaults. Even if you lose a couple customers, you will earn the support and respect of many others."

Another person cited the importance of privacy in the home. "Privacy should not shield the beating and terrorizing of another human being. Also, domestic violence is not just a private matter," says Devlin. "Statistics show that a boy

who grows up in an abusive home is very likely to exhibit aggressive anti-social behaviors in school and to become an abuser as an adult. The price of our inaction is the creation of the next generation of abusers to prey on our daughters and granddaughters."

The final objection was that women also are perpetrators of domestic violence. While true, Devlin says it's the exception not the rule. "To make a difference, let's concentrate on the most common form of domestic violence, not the exception."

GCMADV is undertaking its campaign in partnership with Advocates for a Violence-Free Community. Advocates has been battling domestic and sexual violence in Grand County for over 32 years.

GCMADV is hopeful of doubling its membership by year-end. To join, men must sign a pledge agreeing to never use physical or other forms of domestic violence. Members also agree to take a public stand against domestic violence and to use their positions "to help boys, young men, friends and family understand that domestic violence is never acceptable." To find out more about joining GCMADV, call 970-725-3442 or email GCMADV@hotmail.com.

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