

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

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### Suggested Headline: Looks Can Be Deceiving

Wouldn't it be awesome if bullies were the only ones who wore red and white striped shirts and they all had short black hair styled the same way? All of the murderers would only wear solid black with a red headband, so we could easily identify them, too. Sweet, little old ladies would all wear pale pink and sport the same short, white curly hairdo we would expect. We could so easily identify certain types of people and instantly know who to avoid and who to approach.

Oh, if only life were so simple! Sometimes, though, the people we perceive to be good, or bad, or even scary, may be actuality be someone totally different. It's not always very easy to tell just by looking at someone, and sometimes it's even difficult to tell when you've spent time with them – or even married them!

Many people who become victims of domestic violence are married to their offenders. Some are in long-term, serious relationships, and some may be dating. Other victims of domestic violence are abused by another family member – a parent or even a child. These victims do not all wear white shirts and have blonde hair – it's far, far more diverse than that! Victims – and offenders – may look just like you and I, your mother, father, sister, brother, preacher, grandma, friend, or even a celebrity. Domestic violence knows no boundaries.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is recognized in Madison County during the month of October each year. Its victims are many. Domestic violence occurs among all races, gender, ages, and religions. It happens to people of all income levels. Being a victim of domestic violence should not be something to be ashamed of. Ignoring domestic violence IS something we should be ashamed of.

Just because someone you love, are in a relationship with, or is part of your immediate family isn't slapping, hitting, or shoving you doesn't mean you aren't a victim. Domestic violence occurs in many ways -- both physically and emotionally. Does that person embarrass you with bad names and put downs? Does she/he look at you or in ways that scare you? Do they control what you do, who you see or talk to, or where you go? Does he/she stop you from seeing or talking to friends and family? Do they take your money, or refuse to give you money? Do they shove you, slap you, or hit you? Do they threaten to hurt or kill your pets, children, you, or themselves? Do they promise you it will be different next time and shower you with gifts and love after they're harmed or hurt you?

These are only a few of the questions that can open up a conversation with someone you love to help them evaluate their relationship and seek help if needed. Domestic Violence doesn't have to be tolerated. We need to stop the continuous cycle that keeps domestic violence prevalent. Don't be silent. Use this month of October to help increase awareness of domestic violence and help victims to use their voices to protect themselves and their families. Speak out against domestic violence. This is one time when silence is not golden.

If you are a victim of domestic violence, do not be ashamed. Call 1-888-45-AWAKE or 1-800-799-SAFE now to speak with someone who can help get you out of this vicious cycle of abuse, and always, be safe out there!

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