
Texas Teen Dating Violence

Awareness and Prevention Week

February 5 - 9, 2007

TEXAS YOUTH EDUCATE THEIR PEERS ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE WITH THE HELP OF TOOLKITS

Austin, TX – Already this year, more than 200 schools around the state have received special Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention toolkits, which include posters, fact sheets and a hands-on curriculum so that students can educate their peers about the warning signs of dating violence during the 2nd annual Texas Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week (Feb. 5-9).

On Monday, February 5, 2007, youth, anti-violence advocates and the community gathered at Gonzalo Garza High School in East Austin to kick off the awareness week with a press conference, which was organized by the Governor’s Commission on Women, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, the Texas Council on Family Violence, the Women’s Advocacy Project and SafePlace.

At the press conference, Elizabeth Crecente, mother of murdered Bowie high school student and teen dating violence victim Jennifer Crecente, spoke out about the steps parents, teachers and the community must take if they find out a young person is in an abusive dating relationship.

“No one can stop dating violence alone. I certainly could not do it,” said Crecente. “It takes a coordinated community response to help young people realize that certain behaviors are not healthy.” Crecente stressed the importance of educating young people even earlier than high school. “I think we should begin talking about this issue with children as early as middle school.”

In addition to Crecente, a student activist from Big Lake, Texas, spoke about how she used the curriculum in her school to raise awareness about the issue among her peers. “So many young people don’t even know that there are many statewide resources available to them if their boyfriend or girlfriend is physically, sexually, emotionally or verbally abusing them,” said high school senior Marissa Contreras. “These toolkits are so user-friendly and full of information that is going to save lives.”

The statistics of dating violence are certainly alarming. 75 percent of Texas youth, ages 16 to 24, have personally experienced dating violence, or know someone who has, according to a statewide, online survey conducted by the Texas Council on Family Violence in 2006. Nationally, one in three teens has personally experienced dating violence.