

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OUTREACH — ARCHDIOCESE of CHICAGO — AWARENESS - SERVICES - PREVENTION



Good News About the Fight to End Domestic Violence

Spring 2021

## Virtual Benefit Gala a Big Success

In this year of Covid-19 challenges, ACDVO succeeded in holding its Gala Benefit via Zoom on Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. The good news is that the gala generated \$25,405 to help carry on our ministry! About 90 people joined for an informative and fun celebration of Fr. Chuck's birthday and the great work of this organization.

Fr. Brendan Curran, O.P., a lively emcee, kept things moving, and Chicago's Cardinal Blase Cupich sent a greeting that included his thanks to all those working in parishes to eliminate domestic violence. John Monaco, ACDVO's COO, and its two coaches for Dating Matters, Yolanda Owens and Jessica Caccavallo, reported on their work teaching about healthy relationships in schools. The domestic violence committee from St. Robert Bellarmine parish presented how they are keeping their ministry alive during Covid-19. A big hit was a video of the baker styling and decorating Fr. Chuck's cake. Ending the evening fun, the Executive Committee danced the Macarena on Zoom, reminiscent of past in-person gala events.

Raffle winners were: James & Pamela Dieters, #6853—\$100; Paul Gearen, #3860—\$250; Elvira Miranda, #10620—\$500.

Thanks to all who support our work with your generous donations. We cannot survive without your help.



*Gala 2021 Leaders Celebrating via Zoom*

## Dating Matters: 3 Things We Emphasize When Talking with Schools

By John Monaco, COO, ACDVO



To help children understand and embrace healthy relationships and avoid teen dating violence, ACDVO is piloting the curriculum developed over an eight-year period by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Called *Dating Matters* (DM), the program starts in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and over the next few years will progress to include 7<sup>th</sup>

and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. We now have four schools committed for the 2021-2022 school year: St. Agnes of Bohemia and St. Malachy + Precious Blood in Chicago, St. Mary in Riverside and St. Francis Xavier in La Grange. Our goal is five schools.

What have we learned to clarify and emphasize when talking with schools?

**1** First, to truly appreciate the significance of the validation of the Dating Matters Curriculum, it is important to differentiate between typical pedagogical measurements and health assessments as used for Dating Matters. Very often in school settings, knowledge retention is a key measurement. The CDC's validation of Dating Matters utilized health assessment surveys which measured changes in behavior, proving that DM is effective in changing behavior. Here's a different example: it is one thing to learn that smoking is damaging to health and to remember that smoking is unhealthy; it is quite another thing to change one's behavior and stop smoking. To re-emphasize, Dating Matters changes behavior. *(continued on p. 2)*

## Upcoming Events

**ACDVO's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Survivors' Mass** will be offered at Holy Name Cathedral on Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 pm. Mark your calendars, please. In-person attendance will be encouraged, but the Mass will also be streamed online. The good news of this ministry is spreading, and an increasing number of dioceses are instituting an annual Mass of this kind.

**ACDVO's Fall All-Network Meeting** will be held via Zoom on Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 9:30-11:30 am; a link will be sent in early September. Contact Jan Burdulis at [jburdulis.acdvo@gmail.com](mailto:jburdulis.acdvo@gmail.com) to update your email.



# Volunteers Make ACDVO Work

## Meet Adele Bach, ACDVO Communications Chair

Attending Catholic school in the 1950's Jim Crow South, I learned about racial injustice at a young age. I was troubled by the "colored only" drinking fountains and Blacks being restricted to the back of the bus. Later in Chicago, I saw faith communities work for civil rights and an end to the Vietnam War; I lost a dear friend who volunteered to fight there in 1967. I became involved, marched against the Iraq War and was arrested with the Catholic 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice.

In 2006, I joined some parishioners at Queen of All Saints parish to form a Social Justice Ministry. We focused on racial justice, immigration and refugee rights. No one talked about domestic violence, which was never mentioned in church until 2014 when Fr. Chuck Dahm, O.P., preached a powerful homily at all the Masses.

Years before, domestic violence had afflicted our family. Although I once asked for help for a family member at the rectory, no one ever responded. My college girlfriend also confided that her husband broke their one-year-old son's arm and pushed her down the stairs. She never thought of going to her parish. After Fr. Chuck's homily, the pastor received several angry letters claiming the church had no business raising this private matter in the pulpit.

Despite this resistance, our Social Justice Ministry expanded to include domestic violence. It eventually merged with two DV ministries at St. Mary of the Woods and St. Martha parishes. We held prayer vigils, brought DV agency staff to speak and displayed the *Silent Witness* exhibit. With these events and washroom hotline cards, parishioners learned their parish did not condone domestic abuse and wanted to help victims and their children.

I am honored to serve on ACDVO's Executive Committee, where I have learned so much. I chair the Communications Committee, working with a team savvy in print, digital and social media. I believe we can do seemingly impossible things even with limited resources. As people of faith, we can all challenge injustice if we live the compassion and love of Jesus Christ.



Adele Bach, Communications Chair

## Dating Matters, continued from page 1

**2** Second, Dating Matters instruction begins in 6<sup>th</sup> grade before most children form dating relationships. When instruction is delayed until high school and beyond, it is much more difficult for children to set aside their feelings and clearly assess the healthy or unhealthy nature of their relationships. Early instruction is key to recognizing and developing healthy relationships and avoiding unhealthy ones.

**3** Third, we have found the need to stress that intimate partner violence – dating violence and domestic violence – is found across all demographics and realize that nearly 50% of domestic violence victims were in an abusive relationship as teens. In a baseline 2010 study, the CDC reported on 16,507 completed interviews, 9,086 women and 7,421 men. Women reported that rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner occurred across all communities: multiracial women - 53.8%, American Indian - 46.0%, Black - 43.7%, Hispanic - 37.1%, White - 34.6%, and Asian - 19.6%. Data for men also indicated that intimate partner violence is found in all demographic groups. Clearly, Dating Matters is important for all school communities.

Schools interested in participating should contact John Monaco at [jmonaco.acdvo@gmail.com](mailto:jmonaco.acdvo@gmail.com). In addition, ACDVO arranges virtual talks on teen dating violence for parishes.

## ACDVO Executive Committee

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## CDC Curriculum: First Step A Big Success

St. Agnes of Bohemia school in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood is the first Catholic school in Chicago to implement the Dating Matters curriculum on healthy relationships developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ACDVO introduced the curriculum to the school and provided a coach, Yolanda Owens, to assist Todd Williamson, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Most St. Agnes students are Hispanic, predominantly from Mexican immigrant families who live in a low-income neighborhood that struggles with violence. Mr. Williamson did yeoman's work implementing the curriculum during the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching two in-person classes and one online.

He reported his students were very receptive; in fact, they were excited about each class. Some topics covered were: 1. New vocabulary about relationships, 2. Different responses to real life situations, 3. How to recognize and respond to abusive language and behavior, 4. No need for guilt in breaking up relationships, 5. Tools to help become better friends and partners. Through it all, the students felt empowered.

Mr. Williamson summed up, "What I liked most is that I saw these children learn skills that will help protect them and others from violence. When I retire and look back on my career, I might say this curriculum was the most important thing I ever taught."

Ms. Owens, ACDVO's coach, commented: "I have been teaching about healthy relationships in schools for 16 years. I have never seen a teacher as understanding, compassionate and engaged with students as Mr. Williamson. He made this curriculum work."



## Teens Learn about Trauma-Induced Mental Illness

*By Jessica Caccavallo, L.C.S.W., Prevention Educator*

Because family abuse often causes or triggers trauma, it is important that young people and their parents have safe spaces to discuss and explore mental health issues. Those who experience violence have an increased likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, issues with interpersonal relationships, substance misuse, and even suicide ([rainn.org](http://rainn.org), [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)).

For that reason, in March 2021, Jessica Caccavallo, an ACDVO Prevention Educator, provided classes via Zoom to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Steward School in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood. The topics, chosen by 8<sup>th</sup> graders, were anxiety and depression: what they are, how to know if you have them and where to get help. Students had amazing anonymous questions submitted via [mentimeter.com](http://mentimeter.com), an interactive presentation site.

At the end, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade leaders provided their classmates with a journal listing local and national resources and self-care activities to help students on their journeys. Afterwards, many students reached out for support regarding their mental health and were connected to appropriate services for concerns such as suicide, loneliness, eating disorders and social isolation.

Alma Haro Serrano, a social worker from Hope Family Services at The Resurrection Project, offered a similar session for parents to help them address their teens' mental health issues and the related social stigmas, as well as to help them understand how to talk with their teens. Jessica and Alma were invited to return anytime for more sessions about trauma.





# What's New with Our Partners

## ACDVO's National Partner in Washington, DC

by Lauri Prybysz, Education Director, National Institute for the Family



The Catholics For Family Peace (CFFP) Education and Research on Abuse initiative offers assistance with education and resources for communities to promote peace within families. CFFP is not a direct service provider, but works with parishes, dioceses and other organizations to help recognize, respond to and prevent domestic abuse under the aegis of the National Institute for the Family. Formed in 2011, it serves as a clearinghouse for best practices for ministries working to prevent domestic violence in Catholic communities.

CFFP asks people to pray for an end to domestic abuse and provides [free prayer resources](#). It promotes prayer for victims and those who cause harm, child witnesses, extended families and communities, police and service providers. To help parishes, dioceses and organizations respond to domestic violence, CFFP offers webinars, training, free [downloadable resources](#) and a [media toolkit](#) in English and Spanish.

Together with ACDVO, CFFP developed a free [educational module for marriage preparation](#), available in English, Spanish and French. It also promotes ministry training in DV by Dr. Christauria Welland, Ph.D., a Catholic psychologist, [www.paxinfamilia.org](http://www.paxinfamilia.org).

CFFP currently co-hosts the DV Awareness Month Partnership. To date, 14 dioceses and 21 Catholic organizations collaborate to promote DV Awareness during October with special Masses, educational events and resources. The 5<sup>th</sup> National Mass for DV Awareness will be at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.

Dr. Sharon O'Brien is CFFP's director, supported by a board of advisors and experts in the field. Fr. Chuck is a co-founder and active board member. CFFP is an initiative of the [National Institute for the Family](#), a registered 501(C)3 nonprofit. Contact: [Sharon O'Brien, Ph.D.](#), 301-651-8190; [catholicsforfamilypeace@gmail.com](mailto:catholicsforfamilypeace@gmail.com); Box 1477, Severna Park, MD 21146.

## Catholic Charities Gives Congressional Testimony

In March, Catholic Charities (CC) of Chicago joined with Catholic Charities USA to advocate for survivors of domestic violence. Chief Program Officer, Ami Novoryta, testified before the House Committee on Education and Labor's Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services. Her topic: "Ending the Cycle: Examining Ways to Prevent Domestic Violence and Promote Healthy Communities." Ami's compelling virtual testimony highlighted the immense challenges survivors face— isolation, poverty, housing instability, and mental health, to name a few—and the variety and depth of services Catholic Charities and the Archdiocese customize for each family on their path to safety and stability.



**Catholic Charities Expansion:** CC provides DV services for survivors and their families in Cook and Lake County. Its new office in Chicago's Westside Austin neighborhood at Augustus Tolton Center has welcomed two new staff: Constance Curry, Case Manager, and Maria Prasek, Outreach Worker. Both work with Kelsha Reyes, Counselor, and Beth Klieger, Clinical Manager, to provide counseling and financial assistance to survivors as they continue their journey to safety and healing.

The team has provided sessions on DV dynamics, healthy relationships and trauma interventions at Loretto and St. Anthony Hospitals, Oak Street Health, A Safe Haven and Hepzibah Services. Currently it has open enrollment for support groups and life skills classes and will offer a Facebook live event with Loretto Hospital this summer to increase awareness and provide services for DV survivors. Contact Maria Prasek (312) 655-7106 to enroll or for information.

### *Thank You So Much for Your Generous Support*

Thanks to all who donate so generously to support our ministry. We appreciate anything you might share at this time. We hope we will soon be back to full and normal participation in our parishes and communities. Our work is moving forward. Help us reduce if not eliminate, domestic violence from our midst. May God bless you with good health, love and peace. Contact Charles W. Dahm, O.P., 1914 S. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60608, 312-371-7752, [cdahm13@gmail.com](mailto:cdahm13@gmail.com)