

What do domestic violence awareness and bipartisanship have in common? The color purple.

Evelyn Lespinasse, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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STUART — For a woman who advocates for domestic violence awareness and prevention on a daily basis, SafeSpace CEO Jill Borowicz thought she had conceived of every compelling way to get the message out. During her trip to Washington, D.C. in October, as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, she was delighted to hear a new perspective on the topic of domestic violence.

While participating in U.S. House of Representatives Congressional Special Order Hour on Capitol Hill, Borowicz was witness to Representatives from both sides of the political aisle giving compelling and heartfelt speeches.

Representative Donna Edwards (D, Washington DC), former co-founder and first Executive Director of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, reminded listeners that domestic violence crosses all lines - race, gender, age, ethnicity, geography and socio-economic status.

Congressman Patrick Murphy (D, Florida), who represents District 18 where SafeSpace offices and shelters are located, also spoke: "We as a society have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us. A woman is battered every 15 seconds in our country. Behind this harrowing statistic is a sister, a mother, a daughter. This isn't just a woman's issue. It's a family issue, a community issue, an economic issue, and a moral issue."

But the light bulb went off in Borowicz's head when Republican Congressman Ted Poe from Texas proudly displayed his purple tie to the Speaker and explained that the color purple is what you get when you mix red and blue together. With red being the symbolic color of Republicans and blue representing Democrats, he made the case that domestic violence is most certainly a non-partisan issue that affects everyone.

"They came together with a united voice to champion the issue of Domestic Violence prevention and it was an incredibly moving experience," said Borowicz.

In the spring, as part of SafeSpace's year-round efforts to bring greater awareness about domestic violence, the organization will be hosting its annual Every Woman is My Sister event on March 22 at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart. The event celebrates both survivors and victims of domestic violence who have triumphed in shaping better, safer lives for themselves and their children. Tiffany Carr, President/CEO of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence will serve as the event's keynote speaker. Columba Bush, Florida's former first lady and wife of former Governor of Florida Jeb Bush will be attending as an honored guest. Bush has been a champion of domestic violence for many years and is actively involved with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

"We're thrilled to have the Former First Lady of Florida, Columba Bush join us for the event this year," Borowicz said. "We made quite an impact on Capitol Hill, and our goal is to continue to educate citizens and lawmakers on this bi-partisan issue so that funding and support for domestic violence prevention is available."

"As a society, we must continue to recognize the serious threat that domestic violence poses and force this issue out of the shadows. Batterers are deadly serious and our community must be too. Education and understanding of the issue and its impact on the lives of our friends, family members and neighbors is paramount to efforts to both eliminate domestic violence in the future and help today's victims become tomorrow's survivors," Borowicz added.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, call the 24-hour hotline at 800-500-1119. For more information, to volunteer or to register for the Every Woman is My Sister event visit <http://www.safespacefl.org> or <http://www.facebook.com/safespacefl>.

Four things to know about domestic violence

- One in every three woman will become a victim in her lifetime.
- On average, four women die every day in America at the hands of someone they love and with whom they have an intimate relationship.
- Domestic violence is not just physical abuse. It can take many forms, including verbal, sexual, emotional, financial and psychological abuse.
- Domestic violence affects every part of your community, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

About SafeSpace

SafeSpace is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization that operates programs in Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties where families can escape to a safe environment. SafeSpace offers victims of domestic violence safety, support, and education to empower them and provide the assistance necessary for them to set a positive direction and gain control over their own lives.

Shelter facilities for victims are located in Martin and Indian River counties and serves victims throughout the Treasure Coast. SafeSpace offers services to all victims of domestic violence and their dependents regardless of race, gender, age, religion, political belief, national origin, immigration status, physical or mental disability, marital status, sexual orientation or language spoken.

To learn more about SafeSpace please visit <http://www.safespacefl.org>, call 772-223-2399 or connect with SafeSpace on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/safespacefl>.

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