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Domestic Violence Awareness Month

The late Norm Maleng, a courageous man and King County's former prosecuting attorney, once described domestic violence as "...[A] crime against the human spirit." Mr. Speaker, Norm was right. Domestic violence is a terrible scourge that irreparably damages individual lives, families, and communities. Its effects are permanent. It can't be taken back or apologized away.

We like to set up lines of demarcation, Mr. Speaker, and separate each other into distinct groups: women and men, black and white, young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, and so on. Domestic violence ignores these distinctions in its assault on the human spirit. The startling statistics send a clear message: domestic violence is a powerful force that recognizes no boundary. Every year, fifteen-and-a-half million children are exposed to domestic violence in their homes and 2,000 children will die because of it. One in four women and one in nine men will be victimized by domestic violence in their lifetime. In my home state, 755 lives were lost to domestic violence between 1997 and 2010. The majority of homeless women and children in the United States are in that position because of domestic violence. If, somehow, those statistics don't frighten and sadden you, think about it in another way: Every year, the United States spends \$5.8 billion dollars in health care, lost productivity, and lifetime earnings because of domestic violence.

I urge my colleagues to support organizations committed to stamping out domestic violence in their hometowns and across their state and nation. Organizations like the Eastside Domestic Violence Program (EDVP) in the 8th District of Washington. In 2010, EDVP answered 10,069 crisis calls from victims of domestic violence and provided services to 4,700 victims. EDVP not only provides a 24-hour help line for victims, but they also provide shelter and safe places for victims to stay after they've made the difficult choice to leave their home behind. Unfortunately, for every person receiving shelter at EDVP, they are forced to turn away 18. They simply lack the resources needed to meet the full need of the community.

Mr. Speaker, together, as a community and as a nation, we can help prevent domestic violence and better serve those who've been victimized. As we observe Domestic Violence Awareness Month throughout October, I urge every American to take the time to tell their spouse, mother, father, child, brother, sister, or friend how important they are to their life. Hug every single one. Find out how best to extend a helping hand to victims and find the "EDVP" in your area.