



Domestic violence survivors meet people who hurt others Innovative program may help healing begin

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The Domestic Violence Surrogate Dialogue program in Hillsboro received a \$3,000 grant recently from "Students4Giving," a program based at the Sylvania Campus of Portland Community College.

The program provides a safe setting in which domestic violence survivors and offenders engage in a one-time conversation. The survivor and offender have no previous relationship and voluntarily participate.

A goal of the session is to generate understanding between the victim and offender as to each other's views and attitudes, as well as focus on the many consequences of domestic violence.

Ideally, the dialogue will be a catalyst for the victim to begin the release of feelings that will allow them to abandon anger and initiate a healing process.

Probing questions never asked of their own abuser, for fear of retribution, can be asked of the offender.

At the same time, the conversation may motivate the offender to seek and find redemption by recognizing that the victim is a person who has been harmed, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally.

By revealing insights into their own behavior motivations and manipulations, the offender can enable the victim to discover how to identify and avoid violence in future relationships.

For both surrogates, these outcomes would represent a dramatic breakthrough.

Participation requires:

Signed informed consent waivers authorizing audio taping of the dialogue.

Screening with metal detectors at the entrance of the Washington County Community Corrections, housed inside the county courthouse. Offenders do not leave the meeting room until the survivor has exited the building, and participants may request security guard escorts.

An interview of the survivor and his or her counselor or support person with a male and female facilitator to assess readiness.

A separate interview with the offender and his or her counselor or support person.

Immediately following the dialogue, the male and female facilitators separately interview the survivor and the offender to learn their initial reactions.

Follow-up sessions.

For more on DVSD, call Carrie Outhier Banks or Gayle Sheller at 503-846-3023.

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