

Stories of Domestic Abuse Survivors All Around...and Beyond ... the Park

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the Jewish women, men, and teenagers in our community in need of help, five Jewish organizations have been displaying blue silhouettes representing stories of four Jewish survivors of domestic abuse. All currently live in our community and range from a man divorced for 18 years to a teenager's nightmare remembered from a few years past (see sidebar). Purple pins on chests proudly showed support for victims, while purple bands continue to be sold in gift shops to help pay for programs and services.

The Levine Jewish Community



Rabbi Judy Schindler, Dawn Epstein, and Judy Szatmary.

Center featured the silhouettes throughout October and more than 100 pins were taken to be worn during the month. Temple Israel was the venue the first weekend of the month, while at Temple Beth El the weekend of October 14-15

not only saw the silhouettes, but about 150 ribbons pinned on supporters who came to hear Associate Rabbi Jonathan Freirich sermonize on the issue. The silhouettes reappeared for Beth El Sisterhood's annual "Soup and Salad in the Sukkah" on October 17. Co-President Judy Szatmary designated one chair in the sukkah/dinner to be left empty as a symbol of those women who could only be there in spirit. "They are the Jewish women who are silenced, who are ashamed or afraid to speak about the abuse they experience at the hands or the lips of a loved one," said Ms.

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Story of a Jewish Teenager in Our Community

We met in high school when I was 16. He was the nicest guy and everyone, including my family and friends, just adored him and believed we would marry. Love blinded me to the red flags that others began to notice, especially once he was in college. If he had a few drinks, he would pick vicious fights, screaming and pushing into my face. He called or texted obsessively, wanting to know where I was and

what I was doing. I was always in the wrong and apologizing and he was always the victim. I tried to break it off, but he'd swear he had changed and even went to counseling a few times. Instead of getting better, it escalated. He would corner me, throw things, and scream obscenities. After five years, I had the courage to get out, but not until the night he climbed onto my roof and broke my window. Even then it was

hard, because being in a relationship meant the world to me, as I think it does to most young girls. It is easy to mistake power and control for love. I'm thankful that my parents were educated about abuse and could help and support me until I was ready to get out.

Now 23 years old, this woman is a college graduate and has been out of the relationship for several years.

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CJP is a partnership of Temple Beth El,
Temple Israel and the Levine Jewish Community Center.

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