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Hair stylists get lesson in spotting abuse

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By Michelle Ma

Triplicate staff writer

CRESCENT CITY — As the saying goes, your hairdresser is the first to know.

Stylists may be in the ideal position to notice signs if their clients are being domestically abused.

A new workshop offered through Harrington House seeks to train hair stylists, manicurists, cosmetologists and others in the beauty industry to recognize signs of domestic abuse and offer support for their clients.

The program took place Wednesday evening as part of October's domestic violence awareness month. If salons express interest, Harrington House plans to hold the workshop at area salons for future in-house training, said Teri McCune-Oostra, project director of Harrington House, a resource center and shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children.

Haley Rutter, a stylist at Zar's Hair & Nail Salon, said she has seen her clients deal with abusive partners. Sometimes a husband will order his wife to have her hair look a certain way.

Rutter, who attended the workshop, has had families show up at her home to escape from abusive partners, she said.

"If we can learn a protocol on how to deal with this, we're one step ahead of the game," Rutter said.

Spotting the signs

The educational workshop, called "Cut it Out," is a national program of the Salons Against Domestic Abuse Fund, which tries to empower salon employees to fight domestic abuse. Clairol Professional is one of the

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sponsoring companies.

Harrington House employees ordered the workshop materials—which include workbooks, a PowerPoint slideshow and videos—to conduct the training session.

Before domestic violence awareness activities began in early October, Harrington House staff visited salons to invite employees to the session. Some stylists said they had seen clients who might be dealing with abuse, said DJ Ramsey, operations manager for Harrington House.

"It's amazing how many women out there are in that predicament," she said.

Around Del Norte County, domestic violence is a large issue that the public must recognize and work to prevent, said Benita Cabrera, program supervisor for North Coast Rape Crisis Team, which serves the county.

"The community needs to understand that domestic violence is about (abusers) needing to have power and control over the people in their life," she said.

Making progress

Del Norte County is making progress, Cabrera said. Several abuse-prevention organizations and month-long awareness campaigns help to inform the community and help those who are victims of abuse, she added.

Awareness efforts this month include purple teddy bears and ribbons to show support for preventing domestic violence. Colorful t-shirts—made by abuse survivors—line the windows of businesses around Crescent City.

"I think that it helps bring the community together to know they're all being educated about the same thing at the same time," Cabrera said.

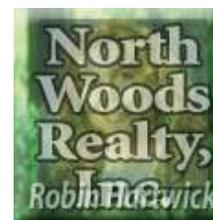
The first domestic violence awareness month was observed October of 1987. Within the year, the first national toll-free hotline for domestic violence victims began.

California Partnership to End Domestic Violence is a statewide organization that facilitates a partnership with agencies that work to prevent domestic violence.

"Domestic violence is a public health epidemic that affects victims in all areas of their lives, and so professionals in all spheres of public life should be prepared to help address the problem," said Camille Hayes, membership and communications coordinator for the organization.

National domestic violence hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

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