



HOPE

Written by Tony Maxwell

I'm hopeful about the men who have stepped up in this community to lend their voice to the cause.

Several years ago, for example, we asked several prominent members of the community—the Sanderson family (lacrosse), Orangeville's mayor at the time, members of local police services, CPGA Hall of Fame golf coach Sam Young, and several others—to stand up with a daughter, sister, granddaughter...and the response was overwhelming.

To this day, we look at those posters of men who refuse to accept violence.

I'm hopeful because of Family Transition Place's (FTP's) Youth Education program; female *and* male educators going into schools and engaging students about healthy relationships.

I'm hopeful because of the response we had to our Walk in HER Shoes events in recent years. Yes, grown men tottering along in pink high heels is, on the surface, comical. But the intent and the message are deadly serious. Our discomfort is nothing like the women and children who suffer from domestic violence.

Over the years, as supporters of the national White Ribbon campaign or as part of our own local group (MENtors), men in this community have organized events to raise awareness about domestic violence...and to support the work of FTP.

We organized a Father's Day lunch for dads and their sons where a former CFL linebacker share his story of growing up in a poor house in Detroit where he witnessed his mother's abuse.

We've been invited to speak at local service clubs and churches (that's a frightening experience if you're wary of public speaking). Always the reception is amazing, particularly from women who are so used to this issue being isolated as "a woman's issue."

In fact, we realized very early on that violence against women and girls is NOT a women's issue; it is a MEN's issue.

Yes, some men are victims of violence but the fact is, the overwhelming majority of domestic violence victims are women and with very few exceptions the perpetrators are male—and they are usually known to the victim.

I'm hopeful that more and more men in this community "get it" and are starting to say "no" to the off-colour jokes in the locker room or on the golf course. They make the connection that the common slang which thinks "bitch" is okay is NOT OKAY.

And now, personally, as a new board member with FTP, I'm honoured to serve among some amazing, committed, passionate women (and men!) who are pouring their hearts and souls into this often devastating and challenging work.