

2nd Annual Walk to End Domestic Violence

Upon driving up to Eisenhower Park, Field 5 in Nassau County, Long Island on the Sunday morning of October 27th, 2013, you would have spotted a large group of huddled masses. Purple balloons lined the podium, granola bars and water bottles were being handed out in assembly line formation, and hands were grabbing t-shirts in the search for the right size. These people had all come out on a weekend morning and braved the cold to show their support for Domestic Harmony Foundation's (DHF) Second Annual Walk to End Domestic Violence.

Program coordinator of DHF, Jasia Mirza, commenced the morning's events with her kickstarting speech. She started off her speech by declaring: "First, women are not the only ones who can be victims of abuse. Men, albeit a relatively small percentage, are also at risk for domestic violence and no one, ultimately, is immune to this."

After some applause in the rightful recognition of domestic violence as a societal, and not just a women's problem, Mirza continued: "...domestic violence is a truly complex issue...The cycle of abuse includes the so-called "honeymoon" phase in which a false notion of love is conveyed to victims who cling to the good times often out of fear for financial, legal, or other imminent hurdles. However...the level of violence that the victim is subject to elevates with each cycle of abuse...Often, victims will sense warning signs but hope to reform the abusive partner or avoid engaging in behaviors that they feel might trigger the violence...overcoming domestic violence is clearly no easy feat that can be summed up by telling women to "simply leave." This is a ludicrous assertion that avoids recognizing that leaving an abusive relationship requires tremendous support from other others, such as family, friends, community partners, and so forth. No one can become a survivor on their own."

Several prominent community leaders attended the walk to show that they, too, believed in DHF's vision of eradicating domestic violence from our communities in order to create a safe and healthy environment for all. Former County Executive Mr. Tom Suozzi first stood up at the podium to speak. He reaffirmed DHF's commitment to domestic violence as a serious societal issue by pointing out that there are numerous barriers that prevent victims from leaving abusive situations. These victims should be able to utilize resources provided the community. Honorable Judge Hope Zimmerman then spoke and also asserted that while domestic violence victims need to leave their abusive partners, they should not be expected to do it all alone.

Next up was Mr. Hamza Byas, President of the Islamic Center of Long Island, who stressed that domestic violence plagues communities at every racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic level. "Domestic violence knows no boundaries," he proclaimed. Following Mr. Byas was Mr. Rizwan Qureshi, Senior Executive Vice President at HAB bank of New York, who reinforced the importance of the work DHF is doing. Finally, Margaret Abraham, Professor of Sociology and a Special Advisor to the Provost for Diversity Initiatives at Hofstra University, spoke. Abraham has done significant work in combating domestic violence in our communities through her multiple research endeavors.

The walk could not have been made possible without the generous support of co-sponsors HAB bank of New York and Civic Center of Hofstra University. Mr. Veeran Kutty of GNC Baldwin, Trader Joes' Merrick, BJ'S and Stop & Shop donated water bottles and energy bards. Participating groups included the following:

AAPNA Alliance
Adelphi University
Five Towns Indian Association
Islamic Center of Long Island
National Council of Jewish Women of Peninsula Section
National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University
Office of Student Leadership Activities at Hofstra University
Selden Masjid

South Asian American Women Alliance
Student Activities Center at Hofstra University
The Kerala Center

Over three hundred people attended Domestic Harmony Foundation's Second Annual Walk to End Domestic Violence. Participants reflected the multicultural and socioeconomic diversity of the clients that DHF works with on a daily basis. This diversity unfortunately reaffirms the reality of domestic violence as an issue that impacts people of all background. DHF strives to provide victims with necessary support through both interventions and preventive strategies, such as by educating our youth about the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics. The battle against domestic violence in our society is ongoing and there is an incredible amount left to achieve. DHF depends on the support and generosity of people like the participants of the walk to continue making much-needed progress.