



PRESS RELEASE

Relationship Empowerment for Students, Parents, Educators & Community through Theatre

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R.E.S.P.E.C.T.²

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Patricia Newman, R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² president and chairman, as well as campaign organizers/partners/participants, can be made available for interviews upon request.

“Are your tears worth it every time?”

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² kicks off Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month 2009

Dating violence is more common than you think. Research indicates that women age 16 to 24 experience the *highest* per capita rate of intimate partner violence, reports the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- 2008 findings from Teenage Research Unlimited
 - Nearly half of teen girls who've been in a relationship say they've been victims of verbal, physical or sexual abuse by their boyfriends.
 - One in five 13-14 year olds in relationships know friends and peers their age who've been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Nebraska-specific data shows:
 - More than 10 percent of Nebraska high school females have experienced dating violence in the last 12 months. (Source: CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey – 2005 *1% higher than national average*).
 - Over 12 percent of Nebraska high school females report having been forced to have sex. (Source: CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey – 2005 *1.6% higher than national average*).
- Also, based upon R.E.S.P.E.C.T.²'s 2002 survey of nearly 1,000 area high school students:
 - 8% have been physically abused on dates (i.e., hit, kicked, pushed, slapped) one to two times,
 - 12% have been sexually abused on dates (i.e., forced or persuaded to engage in sexual activity they did not want to have) one to two times, and
 - 23% have been verbally abused on dates (i.e., called names, put down, yelled at, sworn at, made fun of) one to two times.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² (Relationship Empowerment for Students, Parents, Educators & Community Through Theatre) and their partners see this as unacceptable and will shed light on the issue during the month of February, national Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. This will be accomplished through an area wide billboard campaign, a teen-focused radio push and on-going educational theatre.

During a press conference at Saint Albert Catholic Schools' auditorium on Monday, February 2, R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² unveiled these messages, presented a scene of their new teen dating violence themed play, "Cracked, but Not Broken," recognized campaign contributors, presented awards to student winners and read a area-wide proclamation from Omaha and Council Bluffs officials.

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The media campaign's prime aim is, of course, targeting teens. R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² knew this had to be accomplished with gripping visuals and messages that would draw in the audience. Early in the planning process, awareness month organizers chose to solicit ideas from area youth—knowing they would give the most valid content. The idea and the resulting contest were a success. Out of nearly 20 submissions, the campaign is anchored around the fall 2008 Campus Ministry Class' work from Saint Albert Catholic Schools. The class articulated victim excuses related to dating violence such as "He really only hit me *once*" and asking questions of a victim such as, "Is this how you pictured *every* time?"

Four billboards, shown in ten prominent locations, take these excuses and questions—pairing them with visuals of a fist, screaming, bruises and tears. Two 30-second radio spots to be aired on Channel 94.1 offer brief vignettes on the two themes. Students from the winning Saint Albert Catholic Schools class provide the spots' youthful vocal talent. All visual and radio messages eventually drive the listener/viewer to the R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² Web site, www.respect2all.org, where they find a self-evaluating dating quiz, hotline numbers and healthy relationship advice.

The awareness month acts as part of a larger initiative--a goal of bringing as many student audiences as possible "Cracked, but Not Broken" and other R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² violence prevention theatre works throughout the 2008-2009 school year. The Iowa West Foundation funds 25 of these performances.

The cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha have together agreed to proclaim February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness month, and R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² thanks them and Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning, who supports teen dating violence education in schools through LB 64, for their support. Additional partners/sponsors include: David Day and Associates, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, Journal Broadcast Group, Lamar Outdoor Advertising, Omaha Steaks and Catholic Charities' Phoenix House (Council Bluffs) of the the Des Moines Diocese.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² is formed of professional actor-educators and led by a professional child psychologist, Dr. Patricia Newman. They travel to schools and businesses presenting educational plays and facilitating discussion and activity preventing violence, bullying and harassment. Since 2001, R.E.S.P.E.C.T.² has presented anti-bullying and relationship empowerment productions to nearly 160,000 students kindergarten through college age in communities across Nebraska and Iowa. For more information on the organization and resources to help combat bullying, visit www.respect2all.org.

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10 billboard locations and themes:

1224 S. 24 th	Are your tears worth it every time?
15 th & Jackson	He really only hit me once.
600 S. 72 nd	Is this how you pictured it every time?
8707 Military	Are your tears worth it every time?
4400 S. 96 th	He really only hit me once.
120 th & Fort	Is this how you pictured it every time?
13901 L St.	She only meant it once.
6328 Grover	She only meant it once.
16 th and O St. in Council Bluffs	He really only hit me once.
3230 W. Broadway in Council Bluffs	Is this how pictured it every time?