The two sides of domestic violence

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WILLIMANTIC — Ines Rivera was in her 20s when she met her husband, Joseph Rivera.
Finding him handsome, she immedi-
ately became smitten and after just three months, became pregnant with the
couple’s child.

Throughout their relationship, Joseph
Rivera was very controlling of his wife, keeping track of where she drove, for
example.
Eventually, however, she was able to
leave him.
Neither Rivera is real — but they could be.

Local events aim to raise awareness

Ines Rivera’s story was one of several
hypothetical scenarios presented during
“In Her Shoes,” a workshop held at
the Eastern Connecticut State University
Student Center Monday evening in rec-
novation of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“In Her Shoes” was a two-hour, inter-
active event run by United Services dur-
ing which participants explored the lives
of female domestic violence victims.

The event will also be held Oct. 27
from 2 to 4 p.m. in Room E239 at
Quinebaug Valley Community College,
742 Upper Maple St., Danielson.

This month, United Service’s Domestic Violence Program also has a display of
The Clothesline Project in the Killingly
and Willimantic public libraries.

The project is a visual display of T-
shirts created by local domestic violence survivors.

“There’s a lot of misunderstandings
about domestic violence,” said Patti
Brown, United Services child advocate/ community educator.

She noted, instead of wondering why
someone would stay in an abusive rela-
tionship, we should wonder how some-
one could abuse another person.

During the workshop, each participant
was given a character and had to make
decisions based on how they thought
their character would respond to various
scenarios.

Each card had the viewpoint of the
character and on the other side, the view-
point of her partner.

Brown explained there are “two sides
to every story.”

People who are in an abusive relation-
ship, she said, “hear their partner’s voice
whether they are with them or not.”

Topics the characters had to address
included social services, welfare, legal,
school and, even, worst-case scenarios

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 Events aim to raise awareness of domestic violence

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that may involve a funeral home.

Brown noted women are more commonly domestic violence victims, but men can be as well.

“It happens when there is an imbalance of power,” she said.

According to a brochure given at the event, signs of an abusive relationship are: stalking and harassment; physical violence; economic control, such as refusing to give the victim money or preventing them from working; being overly jealous about the victim’s relationship with others; disrespecting the victim’s family or friends and keeping him or her from seeing or talking to them; and controlling means of communication, such as the victim’s phone or computer.

United Services offers a variety of services through its domestic violence program — including a 24/7 hotline, shelter, advocacy and counseling services to domestic violence victims.

United Services has two shelters in the area — one in Windham and one in Danielson — for domestic violence victims and their children.

Brown said United Services will take children up until the age of 18 into the shelter.

According to a press release from United Services, the agency provided support to more than 1,000 adults and children from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015.

A brochure given out at the event indicates a 2010 study showed 95 percent of survivors who sought assistance from a local domestic violence agency were more knowledgeable about planning for their safety and more hopeful about their future.

Some, however, cope in other ways.

“A lot of times, victims of domestic violence will turn to alcohol or other substances to cope,” Brown said.

Brown explained the difference between a protective order and a restraining order.

A protective order, she said, is issued in criminal court, while a restraining order must be requested and is issued in family court.

Brown spoke to the issue of domestic violence as it relates, specifically, to northeastern Connecticut.

“We do have high numbers for domestic violence, considering how small some of our towns are,” she said.

Some domestic violence victims leave their abusive partners while others stay with them.

For those who choose to leave, it is often hard to get back on their feet, as was the case for many of the characters mentioned during the workshop.

When Ines Rivera left her husband with her children, for example, she changed her identity to avoid Joseph tracking her down.

That decision, however, made it difficult for her to find work and after two months, she lost her job when an employer could not verify her identity.

Ines Rivera was a nurse, but her educational background was not valid when she changed her name.

“When you change your name, any degree you have is no longer valid,” said Brown.

United Services Domestic Violence Program in Willimantic can be reached at (860) 456-9476. The 24/7, confidential hotline can be reached at (860) 456-9476 or (860) 774-8648. To learn more about United Services, visit www.UnitedServicesCT.org.