

[Back to regular view](#) • [Print this page](#)

## Don't keep abuse a secret

<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/hinsdale/news/forum/900312,do-colhealy-041708-s1.article>

April 17, 2008

**By Carolyn Healy**

I did not know Cindy Bischof, and now I never will. You won't either, despite the fact that she did everything right and took advantage of every legal remedy that was available. Newspaper accounts tell us that when she ended a three-year relationship with Michael Giroux and he became threatening, she secured an order of protection. When he violated the order twice, first by vandalizing her home and entering it again threatening suicide, she notified authorities and he was confined. Once released, he is said to have made a phone call to apologize for his behavior. Then on March 7, just when she may have started to relax, he waited outside her real estate office in Elmhurst and shot her multiple times, killing her. Then he shot himself.

We won't know Stacy Peterson of Romeoville either. We won't know any of the women killed each year by an intimate partner in events that the headlines label murder-suicides, or those where the husband is named a "person of interest" but remains free to raise the children of the dead mothers.

You and I do know, however, some of the 5.3 million living women abused each year, because they live on our blocks, reside in our families, sit next to us at church. Too often we don't we recognize them or know how we might help.

Maybe we need to know more facts. If we really understood that this issue explains 42 percent of the murders of women in the U.S. and accounts for 9 percent of all violent crime, you'd think we'd get busy figuring out what to do. We'd surely want to eradicate a problem that creates health costs of \$5.8 million per year and robs U.S. business of 8 million days of work productivity annually, the equivalent of over 32,000 full-time jobs.

It's as if the whole issue is hidden under a cone of silence. Neighbors don't confide in each other that domestic violence is going on, partly because of shame -- this is not a problem that's easy to admit -- and partly because one of the favorite tactics of the abuser is to isolate the victim and wall off access to support.

The stakes are high. A boy who grows up witnessing family violence is 10 times more likely to reenact it in his own adult relationships; a girl sees acceptance of it as an option. Imagine the impact if we could end the generational transmission of domestic violence once and for all.

What will flip the switch to bring this problem out of hiding, to do what Betty Ford did for addictions? So far, it may be a tag team of O.J. and Drew Peterson, who enrage and empower us every time they open their mouths. But we need to add different voices to drown out theirs.

Change is under way. Newspapers provide coverage. New shelters announce their presence in the community. Bathroom stalls carry posters that point women toward help. A chain of repair shops provides rehabbed cars to women starting new lives. Cindy Bischof's family just started a foundation to further the cause. If each of us found one small way to help -- talking to our children, joining community efforts, documenting the injuries of a coworker, raising funds -- we could join our voices into a chorus that would say, loud and clear, "Enough."

-- Carolyn Healy of Hinsdale is a contributing columnist for The Doings.



© Copyright 2008 Digital Chicago, Inc. | [Terms of Use](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Submission Guidelines](#) • [Advertise With Us](#)