

The METROWEST DAILY NEWS

Walk, rally to raise money for domestic violence survivors

By Danielle Ameden/Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM – The community will come together on Saturday, Oct. 3 to rally with survivors of domestic and sexual abuse at the fourth annual “Walk to Break the Silence.”

Voices Against Violence Director Mary Gianakis said the family-friendly event and 5K is the biggest fundraiser of the year for her organization, but it also carries a mission.

“It’s really intended to be an opportunity for the community to come together to sort of honor the strength and courage of victims and survivors throughout the MetroWest area,” Director Mary Gianakis said, “and to say, ‘No more. This has to stop.’”

Congresswoman Katherine Clark, D-Mass., who represents Framingham, is set to speak and former Middlesex County District Attorney Gerry Leone is an honorary co-chairman.

The rally and speaking program starts at 10 a.m. at the downtown common on the corner of Concord and Park streets. The walk starts at about 10:45 a.m.

While it is free to take part, donations will go to Voices Against Violence and support its work to help victims and survivors of abuse.

Gianakis said the event is a great kickoff for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

She hopes this year’s walk raises \$50,000 that will go to direct services, such as counseling and support groups, crisis intervention and helping victims flee dangerous situations.

Voices Against Violence, a program of the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, operates a 24-hour toll-free hotline at 1-800-593-1125.

In the last fiscal year, the program provided nearly 6,000 hours of direct services to 2,385 victims and survivors and took nearly 1,400 hotline calls, Gianakis said.

For this year's event, Framingham Town Clerk Valerie Mulvey and resident Stephanie Deeley are co-chairing the Planning Committee.

"I think the name is appropriate, The Walk to Break the Silence, because if we want to beat this then I think we have to start talking about it," said Deeley, who believes her sister, Kimberly Parker, died as a result of domestic violence. "Silence isn't an option."

Parker, who lived in East Bridgewater, died mysteriously in 2013 at age 45. Her husband, retired Boston Fire Captain Richard Parker, hasn't been charged in her death, but he was sentenced in March to 4 to 6 years in prison for throwing knives at her in 2011.

Even though the cause of death is undetermined, Deeley said her sister was a victim of domestic abuse and she feels compelled to speak out in her honor.

Deeley said she hopes people come out for the walk and help end sexual and domestic violence.

"We encourage people to sign up online but you can just show up that morning," she said. "You can walk even if you don't donate. You can still raise your voice. Calling attention to the issue and breaking the silence is imperative if we want this to get any better."

To donate and to register for the walk, visit www.firstgiving.com/smoc/vavwalk2015

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