

The Gabby Petito case has captured the nation's attention and cast a spotlight on domestic violence as many believe domestic violence played a role in Gabby's death. While we wait to see what the investigation into her death reveals, the one thing that is certain is that domestic violence remains a problem in our country and locally in Benton County. Much effort, including messaging coming from our office, is focused on bringing help to victims of domestic violence. This is truly a worthwhile effort and we are thankful for those individuals and agencies everywhere who work tirelessly to assist victims caught in the cycle of abuse and violence. For those victims who are struggling to cope with domestic violence, please take that brave first step and reach out to a victim advocacy group. Locally, Anna Marie's Alliance is dedicated to helping victims caught up in the trap of domestic violence.

However, putting an end to domestic violence means changing attitudes and values, particularly those held by men, in our society. Domestic violence will end when enough people make it clear that this is unacceptable behavior. Domestic violence will end when people, especially men, are clear in our words and actions that violence against women will not be tolerated. Domestic violence will end when people, especially men, are clear that it is unacceptable to control, belittle, and dominate their partners. Domestic violence will end when people choose the path of non-violence, even in times of tension and strife in their relationships. As long as there are segments of our society who tolerate others perpetrating domestic violence either openly or with a wink and a nod, as long as there are elements of popular culture that glorify acts of domestic violence, and so long as the deafening silence created by ignoring the problem of domestic violence continues, there will be more victims. More cases like Gabby Petito. More victims like Crystal Marie Bundy of Sauk Rapids, Bao Yang of St. Paul, Caitlin Aldridge of St. Paul, Jackie Ann DeFoe of Cloquet, Yang Liu of Minneapolis, Pauline Hollman of Minneapolis, Keona Sade Foote of Rochester, Jeanine Greyblood of Little Falls, Kelly Jo Marie Kocurek of Hastings, Amanda Jo Vangrinsven of Isanti County, Jennifer Lee Moy of Blaine, or Lacey J. Kuschel of Todd County. The stories of these murdered women may be found alongside the stories of the scores of other victims of domestic violence at the Violence Free Minnesota website, www.vfmn.org/we-remember.

Domestic violence is a learned behavior, often passed from one generation to the next. Breaking that cycle requires someone to step forward and decide the cycle ends with them. One generation at a time, one relationship at a time, and one person at a time, we can create a future where stories of murdered domestic partners are a link to a dark and forgotten past. If you or someone you know needs help ending their participation in violent behavior, there are resources available. The staff at Anna Marie's Alliance can help those who wish to find better ways to deal with conflict and anger in interpersonal relationships a new start toward a brighter future either through programs in their agency or other agencies in the St. Cloud area. The first step starts by contacting Anna Marie's Alliance by telephone at 320-253-6900 or online at www.annamaries.org.

Be part of a better future. Takes steps to end domestic violence. For more crime prevention information and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: <https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.