

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The Humane Society of the United States reports that 71% of domestic violence victims reported that their abuser also targeted their pets. Because of the scarcity of facilities to take in pets of those escaping domestic violence, many victims remain in abusive households for fear of their pets' safety. A New Zealand study found that people may stay in an abusive relationship for up to two years because factors like finding care for pets make it difficult to leave.

"Abusers will take their aggression or threats out on the animals, as a way to keep [survivors] in line and to warn [survivors and their families] that harm will befall them and the animals unless they comply with the abuser's demands," Phil Arkow, ASPCA consultant and coordinator of the National Link Coalition, an organization working to end violence against both people and animals.

"The result is that thousands of people are trapped in abusive relationships because of their concern for animals' welfare," he says. "There can be an extended period of time where the survivor, children and animals are living under a cloud of abuse and risk."

"Animal abuse and domestic violence are often both caused by the same dynamic of power and control," adds Arkow. "Abusers will use whatever weapons they have available to intimidate and control, and that frequently includes pets." Arkow points out that abusers may also target pets that belong to friends and family members who help survivors.

Patter Pets, Inc., a nonprofit shelter, accepts pets of people escaping domestic violence as their space allows, until the owner can be reunited with the pet. They can be reached at 803-319-1502.

SisterCare provides shelter for women and children who are survivors of domestic violence. Our church supports SisterCare with a financial contribution each year. Our goal is to increase that support through increased pledge participation from each member of our congregation. Please prayerfully consider this need as we enter Stewardship Season. Our café leftovers are also donated to SisterCare, and we have stepped up our donations of material goods to SisterCare this year. Please continue to respond to the information and requests in bulletin inserts and Hot Topics throughout the year to support the survivors served by SisterCare.