

# What's happening at Lewis County



*Changing Lives ... One family at a time*

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS AN LGBT ISSUE

There is a lot of media attention on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) issues lately. No matter your personal views, the partner violence that is prevalent within LGBT relationships is alarming. Consider the following:

-The National Violence Against Women survey found that 21.5% of men and 35.4% of women living with a same-sex partner experienced intimate-partner physical violence in their lifetimes; compared with 7.1% men and 20.4% women with a history of only opposite-sex cohabitation. In a similar note, transgender respondents had an incidence of 34.6% over a lifetime according to a Massachusetts survey.

-The CDC's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (released again in 2013 with new analysis) reported that the lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner was 43.8% for lesbians, 61.1% for bisexual women, but only 35% for heterosexual women. For men it was 26% for gay men, 37.3% for bisexual men, but only 29% for heterosexual men (this study did not include gender identity or expression).

These studies refute the myths that only straight women get battered, that men are seldom victims, and that women never batter — in other words, that domestic violence is not an LGBT issue. In fact, the significant increase of abuse is indicative of a serious health risk in the community.

“Abuse is not about violence; it’s about control,” says Beth Leventhal, executive director of The Network/La Red in Boston. “You can be just as controlling of someone if you are small — as if you’re large. It’s about using violence or any other means of gaining and maintaining control.”

Myths about domestic violence, victims’ fear and shame, and a silence that stems from a desire not to harm perceptions of the LGBT community — all these together contribute to making the problem seem invisible. Many people who are suffering either don’t realize that they’re in a terrible situation or don’t know where to go or who to tell. They wonder who will listen, who will believe them. As Leventhal says,

“We don’t have to be perfect to have our rights. We don’t have to live up to a societal expectation to be treated like human beings. We don’t deserve to die.”

Has Opportunities helped you? Send your story to “News” at the address below.

**Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.**  
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**(315) 376-8202**

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