

## Opinion Editorial: Columba Bush

Domestic violence continues to be one of the most critical issues impacting Florida's families and children. You may be surprised to learn that children represent nearly fifty percent of the residents in emergency shelter at any given time. In fact, during the 2013/14 Fiscal Year, Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers provided emergency shelter to 15,611 individuals, 7,219 were children.

Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers are the primary lifeline for domestic violence victims and their children. Through my work with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV), I have learned that our domestic violence centers employ a comprehensive and seamless approach to providing services to domestic violence survivors and their children.

In an effort to increase private revenue for our state's domestic violence centers, I became a founding board member of the FCADV Foundation, whose goal is to create a statewide, private revenue stream to ensure that life-saving services for domestic violence victims and their children are less dependent on government resources. On October 25, Jeb and I hosted the third annual "*Door to Hope*" fundraising event that benefits the Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of many, the event generated in excess of \$400,000 net revenue, with a three year total of approximately 1 million dollars.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and purple is designated as the campaign's signature color. It is the month we coordinate our efforts to create a "top of mind awareness" of the impact that domestic violence has in our state, our communities, and our families. Perhaps you noticed purple bows hanging on a friend's front door or received an invitation to a fundraising event for your local domestic violence center. Perhaps you turned on your television to see a Public Service Announcement that displayed the Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline number. And you most likely read guest columns or opinion editorials written by celebrities, athletes, elected officials, coaches, domestic violence centers, and even this year's Miss America Kira Kazantsev. There was an abundance of activities and articles related to domestic violence last month and I sincerely thank each person that lent his or her voice to this critical issue.

Last year, I challenged every Floridian to take one step toward preventing domestic violence during each week in October. I received hundreds of responses from moms, dads, and teens. One of my favorite responses was from a sixteen-year-old girl named Angela whose mother told her that to earn her allowance she would be required to watch a two hour educational video on how to identify the signs of an unhealthy relationship, and then conduct an educational presentation to her family on what she learned. A single father of three sons, ages 12-17 responded that each week at dinner he discussed the importance of respecting girls and treating them appropriately. Countless others donated food, clothes, time, and money to their local domestic violence shelters. Your actions motivate and inspire me!

During the summer, I overheard an advocate working at one of our shelters say “domestic violence happens every day, every week, and every month.” Her words resonated with me and helped direct the content and the timing of this year’s opinion editorial. Therefore, I am challenging each of us to commit to one thing each month to help educate our communities and families. You can share with your teenagers about how to approach friends who are in unhealthy relationships. Set aside time and talk with your boys about how to respectfully treat girls. Just commit to one action step for the next twelve months. Please email me your action steps throughout the year at [Columba.Bush@fcadvfoundation.org](mailto:Columba.Bush@fcadvfoundation.org). I am humbled to work side by side with each of you to end this crime that permeates our communities.

For additional information about the FCADV Foundation, [www.fcadv.org/foundation](http://www.fcadv.org/foundation)