

PROPOSAL FOR THE PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE (PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE) FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Submitted by Mary Sheie, Terri Refshaw, & Cathy Green, Rachel Circle, Zion Anoka
March 7, 2018

(Note: We use the terms *domestic violence* and *domestic abuse* interchangeably.)

(For questions about this proposal, please contact Mary Sheie, cell 612.910.9475, land 763.422.9802 or email sheimhelen@gmail.com Mary is a resident of Anoka, Cathy of St. Francis, and Terri, the City of Ramsey. All three are also involved in various other Domestic Violence Awareness groups and initiatives locally and in the state.

PREMISE

We propose that The City of Ramsey light its public buildings and spaces purple, the signatory hue for domestic violence, in October 2018. The purpose is to highlight/draw attention to the issue of domestic abuse and join a “conversation” about it that is already going on both statewide and nationally. From that conversation will flow more local education and awareness about this critical issue.

As an initial starting point, the front façade of the Municipal Building in Ramsey which houses City government offices and the police department on Sunwood Drive in Ramsey could be lit with purple flood lights, and trees outside the building could be strung with purple bulbs. Expansion in future years could include purple flood lights other public spaces in Ramsey.

The PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE creates a win-win situation: Residents will get important information about domestic violence, a crime that too often claims the lives of its victims, and the city will get positive public relations for its willingness to shine light (literally and figuratively) on this issue that thrives when people refuse to talk about it.

PARTNERS

Primary partners would be the Ramsey City Council and City Manager, and several of the local and state domestic violence awareness groups that have been working on this including the Rachel Circle at Zion Lutheran Church in Anoka, The Domestic/Sexual Violence Coalition of Anoka County, Alexandra House and the Isaiah Domestic Violence Task Force (part of the Minnesota ISIAAH faith in Democracy group).

TIMEFRAME

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We propose that the purple lights and accompanying publicity happen during that entire month. Our local efforts will be amplified by the additional attention this issue gets during October from professional advocacy groups and organizations across the country.

There could, in addition, be publicity in September (highlighting what will be happening and why) and in November (discussing the impact of and public reaction to the PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE).

TAG LINES (options)

We welcome your input on these options.

(1) Option one is a tag line that focuses solely on the issue of domestic abuse, such as:

- **Breaking the Silence** This is a common tag line associated with domestic violence because abuse flourishes in silence and when people refuse to talk about it. Abusers *count on* everyone’s unwillingness to bring this ugly reality into the open.
- **Domestic Violence: A Public Issue** This phrase highlights the community impact of domestic violence, which has enormous public costs to taxpayer citizens in terms of public health, public safety, the legal/justice system, workplace impact, social service networks and, most critically, the welfare of our children.

(2) Option two is a tag line that reflects on the City of Ramsey *in conjunction with* the issue of domestic abuse, such as **“The City of Ramsey Breaks the Silence about Domestic Violence.”**

BENEFITS TO THE CITY FROM A PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE

(1) The PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE will generate good PR for the City of Ramsey Law Enforcement’s awareness of domestic violence.

(2) The PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE will make a difference for victims. Although the impact of public statements can’t be easily quantified or measured, our advocacy experience tells us that public statements *do* matter. It could give a victim courage to take a step toward leaving his or her abuser, help someone recognize that his or her sibling or friend is abused and reach out, or help a victim realize that what he or she is experiencing is abuse.

(3) Public awareness initiatives like the PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE play a role in promoting systemic change and a normative cultural shift. Helping a victim escape abuse and regain a life free of violence is critically important. However, domestic violence will never be *eliminated* without an attitudinal shift to zero tolerance for abuse. Efforts like the Purple Lights Initiative move us incrementally towards that zero tolerance attitude.

PUBLICITY

Every piece of publicity is an opportunity to (1) bring goodwill to the City of Ramsey for its willingness to tackle a social issue, (2) educate the public about domestic violence, and (3) send a message to the victims of abuse (“we care about you”) and their abusers (“we will not be quiet about this ugly reality”).

The types of publicity could include the following:

- Articles in local publications (*See below for a specific list.)
- Flyers that explain the PURPLE LIGHTS INITIATIVE and list help lines/resources for victims. These could be posted in the Municipal Building, library, police departments, local churches and other venues that are appropriate.
- North Metro television coverage
- Social Media

The articles in local publications could cover a variety of domestic abuse-related topics, depending on each publication’s specifications about the length and breadth of its coverage. Topics could include – and these are just examples – statistics describing the frequency/pervasiveness/cost of abuse, warning signs for abuse of yourself and others, the dynamics of an abusive relationship and resources for help.

*List of possible publications:

1. City of Ramsey Resident (September/October)
2. ABC newspapers
3. City of Ramsey Facebook page
4. Also mentioned in other news releases in Anoka County (Anoka County Newsletter – Fall edition)