

**U.C.C. WELLNESS MINISTRIES TOOLKIT**  
**Section 3**

**EXEMPLARS OF WELLNESS MINISTRIES ACTIVITIES**

**Physical Health and Wellness**

**Title:** *The Clothesline Project – Exposing the Reality of Domestic Violence*

**Age groups served:** Adults

**Reason for development and implementation:**

[The Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), Division of Violence Prevention reports that 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime. Unfortunately, fear and shame keep victims from talking about these crimes. Remaining silent, they suffer alone as they interact with friends and colleagues in our congregations and community. Too few view the church as an ally in their struggle for safety and survival. As a faith community, our responsibility is to minimize the barriers facing the abused and maximize the existing resources available to those in the community.

**Sharing the story:** Sharing understanding and enabling future conversations

Aware of incidents of domestic violence across all segments of our suburban community, the Wellness Ministries Team decided to lend support to victims by making the issue more visible. Collaboration was sought with several other churches and the Women's Center, which had a program for domestic violence survivors. Organizational efforts focused on a week in October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Before that week, collaborating churches and organizations advertised the events. Local stores also posted signs made by a local artist.

The events planned for the week began on a Saturday with a Clothesline Project in the center of the local mall, followed by the distribution of materials at Sunday worship services. Some pastors focused on the topic with meditations and prayers. Several articles in the local paper highlighted the issue. On the second Sunday of that week, an all-community candlelight walk and vesper service brought closure to the week. All these activities were accomplished due to the collaborative efforts of the churches, organizations, and individuals.

[The Clothesline Project](#) began in 1990 on Cape Cod, MA, to bear witness to survivors as well as the victims of violence, to help with the healing process for people who have lost a loved one or are survivors of this violence, and to educate and raise society's awareness of the extent of this violence. During the public display, a clothesline is strung up from which t-shirts may be hung after being decorated.

An explanation of the purpose of the project and requests for assistance led to the mall loaning stanchions to hold the clothesline, tables on which to decorate t-shirts,

and several chairs for those who felt the need to sit down; a donation of 150 new white t-shirts from a local merchant, the contribution of fabric paint and waterproof magic markers by a hobby store, gift of clothespins from a hardware store, and our church donated the copying of all educational materials.

Saturday morning, the event began with the “mall walkers” who came to exercise before the stores opened. As the day progressed, shirts continued to be decorated by a survivor or someone who cared about her experience. Several women had been killed in the past year, and some loved ones chose to hang a shirt that belonged to them.

### **Evaluation:**

- The Clothesline attracted a lot of attention and opportunities to share information. As the collection of shirts grew, so did the shared stories. Over the course of the day, more than 120 shirts were decorated and hung. Each one revealed another life experience. It was an emotionally draining day for the volunteers leading the event.
- The Minister of Wellness and counselors from the Women’s Center, present during the day for those viewing the display, cared for each other at the end of the day.
- Information about domestic violence and community resources was readily received.
- Information about the candlelight walk and vesper service was also distributed. Several people who had engaged in conversation at the mall attended.
- After the display at the mall, the decorated shirts were divided up and loaned to area churches and the Women’s Center for display. Finally, at the end of October, they were collected and safely stored together for future displays.
- The church became known as being supportive of victims of domestic violence

### **Next steps:**

- Continue to increase the awareness within the congregation by using [Learn the Basics](#) provided by the Faith Trust Institute.
- Maintain domestic violence awareness by including the victims in our prayers.
- Identify those prepared to listen to and assist victims within church staff.
- Maintain a public display with a list of community resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts with other congregations and community agencies.

### **Resources:**

- [#TakeAStand Against Domestic Violence](#) provides definitions, up-to-date statistics, and ideas on what to do to raise awareness in the Take A Stand Toolkit.
- [Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence](#) provides informational tools.
- [Faith Trust Institute](#), is a national, multifaith, multicultural training and educational organization founded by Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune, a UCC minister.