

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**High rates of domestic violence highlight importance of teaching healthy relationship skills**  
*October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month*

**Eau Claire, WI –October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016**—Nationally, 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Domestic violence describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. In Wisconsin, we are experiencing a higher rate of domestic violence deaths this year than in years past. As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 65 lives have been lost. That is a life lost every 4.2 days. Almost a quarter of the victims were under the age of 18. We know that unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime. Therefore, it is critical to teach our youth how to have healthy relationships to end the cycle of unhealthy relationships and violence.

Teens often think some behaviors, like teasing and name calling, are a "normal" part of a relationship. However, these behaviors can become abusive and develop into more serious forms of violence. As teens develop emotionally, they are formed by experiences in their relationships. Unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships can have severe effects on a developing teen, thus continuing the cycle. On the other side, healthy relationship behaviors can have a positive effect on a teen's emotional development that last a lifetime.

"We must give our young people skills for healthy relationships throughout their lives," says Abby Hinz, Public Health Nurse. This fall *Amped Health*, a community collaborative focused on teen health, has launched the *Safe Dates* program to educate teens about healthy dating. This evidence-based curriculum provides teens with awareness of what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like. It also gives them skills to develop healthy relationships including positive communication, as well as ways to help a friend in an abusive relationship.

If you are interested in learning more about *Amped Health* or the *Safe Dates* program please contact, Abby Hinz at [abby.hinz@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:abby.hinz@co.eau-claire.wi.us) or 715-839-2859.

