

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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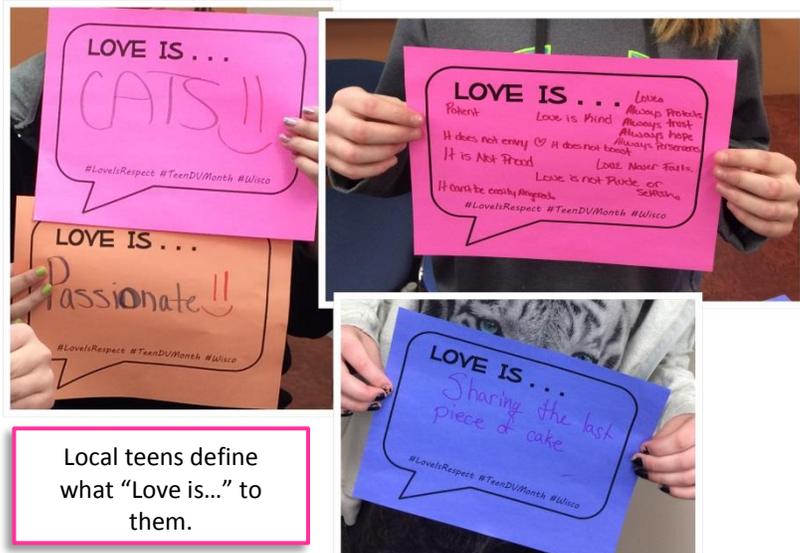
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**February is Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month—“Love is...”**

EAU CLAIRE, Wis.-February, 2017– **February is Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month**, and we are encouraging youth to express what **“Love Is...”** for themselves. While dating violence can happen to anyone, teens and young adults experience it more than any other age group. Nationwide, **one in three** teens is a victim of verbal, sexual, and/or emotional abuse from a dating partner. Over 2,500 teens in Eau Claire County could be experiencing dating violence right now.

Only 33% of teens who are in an abusive relationship ever tell anyone about the abuse. Also, 81% of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they do not know if it is one.

Teens are influenced by their experiences. Healthy relationships can have a positive effect on a teen’s emotional growth. Unhealthy, abusive, or violent behaviors can have harmful short- and long-term effects on a teen. Youth who are victims are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, and have unhealthy behaviors. Youth who are victims of dating violence are at higher risk of experiencing violence later in life.



The teen years are an important time! It is a time to build healthy relationship skills and to define what “Love Is...” for themselves. It is important for the community to have programs working to prevent dating violence. “A lifetime of healthy, positive relationships leads to more engaged citizens and safer communities” says Abby Hinz, a Public Health Nurse at the Health Department.

Currently the Eau Claire City-County Health Department is working with several community partners to teach *Safe Dates*, a program that educates teens about healthy relationships.

**What can you do?**

- **Know the resources:** If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship, the National Dating Abuse Helpline provides free and anonymous support—call 1-866-331-9484 or text “loveis” to 22522. Visit [www.LovelsRespect.org](http://www.LovelsRespect.org) for more information about teen dating violence.
- **Get involved in Eau Claire efforts:** Join Eau Claire Healthy Communities Coalition efforts related to healthy relationship promotion. To learn more, contact Abby Hinz at 715-495-1085 or email [Healthy.Communities@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:Healthy.Communities@co.eau-claire.wi.us)

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