



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Ashlee Wolf  
Director of Philanthropy and Communication  
Phone: (559) 487-1313; Mobile: (559) 916-5101  
Email: ashlee@mmcenter.org

### **The Marjaree Mason Center Encourage the Community to Get Involved In Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October**

Fresno, CA — (October 1, 2024) — October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a time to reflect on the critical issue of domestic violence and to renew our commitment to supporting survivors and working towards prevention. Domestic violence affects millions of people across the nation, transcending age, race, and socioeconomic status. On a local level, according to the California Department of Justice, Fresno County has the highest per capita calls to law enforcement for domestic violence compared to any other county in the State of California.

The Marjaree Mason Center is Fresno County's ONLY provider of domestic violence shelter and support services. Each year, the Center provides thousands of individuals and families with critical and often lifesaving services including 24/7 hotline and crisis response, safety planning, risk assessment, transportation, emergency shelter, case management, counseling, legal advocacy, housing assistance, child advocacy, education and linkages to social services and community-based programs as needed. Last year alone, MMC provided services to 8,399 individuals and over 70,000 nights of safe shelter. Currently, the Center's 24/7 confidential hotline is averaging 900 calls per month.

Domestic violence is a vicious cycle of power and control that includes isolation, physical assault, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse. It extends far beyond its immediate victims and is passed down from generation to generation. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), more than 12 million women and men are abused by their partner each year; in fact, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical abuse at the hands of their intimate partner. It's estimated, that in California alone, over 5,000 survivors of domestic violence seek emergency and supportive services each day.

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. In addition to physical and emotional abuse, survivors of domestic violence often experience financial abuse, which undeniably affects their ability to obtain safe and affordable housing, leaving them with few safe options. Faced with the unimaginable choice between homelessness and living with abuse, women with children often return to their abuser. The existence of the Marjaree Mason Center ensures that there is always another choice and that survivors and their families have a safe place to heal while they work toward rebuilding their lives.

This October, the community is encouraged to stand alongside the Marjaree Mason Center to raise awareness, offer support, and advocate for change. Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities include:

- Date Specific Activities:
  - 40-Hour Domestic Violence Counselor Training (September 30 – October 4). This is required to work or volunteer at an agency such as the Marjaree Mason Center.
  - Top Ten Profession Women & Leading Business Awards Luncheon (October 16<sup>th</sup>)
  - Purple Thursday (October 17<sup>th</sup>)
- Things You Can Do at Home:
  - Talk to your teens or teenage family members/friends/ students about healthy relationships.
  - Make sure your teens know about consent.
  - Be a role model for healthy relationships (with your partner, friends, and family).
- Things You Can Do at School:
  - If you are a teen in a Fresno County high school, you can apply to join the kNOW MORE® program to raise awareness and prevent teen dating violence.
  - Check if your school district has a policy on intimate partner violence or how to handle restraining orders on campus.
- Things You Can do at Work:
  - Review your employee handbook to review your employer’s domestic violence policy and provide a refresher meeting and/or send a reminder email.
  - Order a window sticker from the Marjaree Mason Center that includes our hotline and place it at the entrance of your business.
- Things You Can Do in the Government:
  - Call your representatives. Make sure the candidates you vote for will support legislation that protects survivors and funds safety and support programs.
  - Contact your school board for policies on teen dating violence.
- Things You Can Do in the Media:
  - Do not refer to the Marjaree Mason Center as a “women’s shelter” (we provide services to survivors of all genders and sexual orientations).
  - Refer to MMC as a domestic violence agency.
  - Refer to people who experienced DV in the past as survivors—not victims.
- Things You Can Do on Social Media:
  - ALWAYS ask if you can tag someone in a photo or post (you never know if the person you are with is being tracked by their current or former dating partner.)
- In Your Life:
  - Consider volunteering, organizing a service project or donation drive, or purchasing items from the Marjaree Mason Center Wish List.
  - Consider making a financial contribution to the Marjaree Mason Center within your means, or sign up to become a monthly, recurring donor.
  - Sign up to receive the Marjaree Mason Center email newsletters, and download the Domestic Violence Awareness Month Guide full of resources on what to do when someone asks for help, things to say/not to say, understanding domestic violence, and more.

In addition to 24/7 crisis response and emergency shelter services, the Marjaree Mason Center holds weekly Legal Options classes, S.A.F.E (Survivors of Abuse: Free and Empowered)

Groups, Domestic Violence Support Groups, Kid's Groups, Parent Café and other community groups that are free of charge and open to the public.

To learn more about how you can get involved, visit [www.mmcenter.org](http://www.mmcenter.org).

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### **About Marjaree Mason Center**

For over 40 years, the Marjaree Mason Center has offered safe housing and support services to adults and their children affected by domestic violence in Fresno County. As the only comprehensive domestic violence agency in Fresno County, which has the highest per capita calls to law enforcement in the State of California, the Marjaree Mason Center provides safe housing, legal services, counseling and education to survivors and youth. The Center was founded in 1979 after the murder of Marjaree Mason, a native of Easton, at the hands of her ex-boyfriend, a Fresno County Sheriff's deputy. A graduate of Washington High School and Reedley College, Marjaree lived in Fresno for 31 years and was well known in the community. To contact the Marjaree Mason Center, call the business center at 559.237.4706, or the 24-hour confidential emergency hotline at 559.233.HELP (4357) or [help@mmcenter.org](mailto:help@mmcenter.org). To learn more, visit [www.mmcenter.org](http://www.mmcenter.org).