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One Billion Rising encourages an end to violence against women globally

by Porsia Tunzi

Women, men, children, families, organizations and nations will rise Feb. 14 with the hope of ending violence against women.

The organizers of V-Day, the international campaign that raises awareness each Feb. 14 about violence against girls and women, have created a new campaign called One Billion Rising in honor of the group's 15th anniversary.

V-Day has become a global movement inspired by activist and Tony Award-winning playwright Eve Ensler. Every V-day, productions of Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues" are staged around the world to raise funds for shelters, local groups and crisis centers that work to end violence against women. "The Vagina Monologues," an episodic play by Ensler based on interviews with women about rape and abuse, have been translated into more than 48 languages and presented in more than 140 countries.

This year, V-Day activists are asking 1 billion women around the world and those who support them to "walk out, dance, rise up and demand" an end to violence against women.

"Any opportunity to spread antiviolence -- it's taken," said Salomeh Mohajer, team leader of the Abuse and Violence Intervention and Prevention Program at Catholic Family Services in Hamilton, Ontario. "For us, it's about active participation. How are we ending violence? Well, we are creating services."

The group invites those who intend on "rising" to join a united dance Feb. 14 created by award-winning choreographer Debbie Allen and performed to "Break the Chain," the group's anthem, written and produced by Tena Clark.

One Billion Rising is just another way to take a stand against violence against women and act in solidarity with other services in the community, Mohajer said.

Catholic Family Services plans to join the dance with another local Catholic organization, Good Shepherd, which provides services of shelter, financial aid, sustenance and spiritual healing for men, women and children in Hamilton. Although Family Services is not an official co-host of the dance, the organization is referring women to attend Good Shepherd's event, Mohajer said.

"There's a real sense of camaraderie in our community in terms of the different services," she said. "When there's an event, there's an attempt to make them all successful. When support is needed, the community truly steps up."

Activists worldwide are joining in this movement of solidarity. Groups planning to dance Feb. 14 include MTV, Zumba Fitness, Amnesty International, and A Call To Men, along with colleges, universities and Catholic organizations that stand against violence.

The Women's Center at the University of Illinois, Springfield plans to commemorate this year's V-day with an estimated 50 dancers performing "Break the Chain" twice Feb. 14.

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The Women's Center has supported Ensler's work and productions of "The Vagina Monologues" in years past, said Lynn Otterson, the center's director.

Otterson called the movement empowering and said she hopes word will spread throughout the university's community. She said men at the school have taken the initiative to get involved in the events, even signing a pledge of solidarity with women.

The center also began a Facebook campaign that brings together photos of women and men holding white boards in support of the movement. The women's white boards say "I am rising," and the men's boards say "I support rising women." Otterson said these images stand in solidarity with the global One Billion Rising movement.

Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kan., also plans to get community members, students and faculty to join in a 30-minute dance on their campus as part of the One Billion Rising movement.

"I chose to initiate the production of a V-Day event at JCCC since I am a professor here," said Gina Egan, an adjunct professor on the college's science faculty. "I am doing this to help increase awareness and solidarity against violence against women in our community and all over the globe."

The college will also present a March 30 benefit reading of "A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and a Prayer: Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls," a collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights and edited by Ensler and Mollie Doyle.

A complete list of the organizations involved with this event can be found [here](#). Groups that organize a local rising event are encouraged to visit One Billion Rising online to register or find another group already planning an event.

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