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## On Father's Day, men say no to domestic violence

*Mark Hare*

Violence against women is not a women's issue. It's everybody's issue. That's why a few guys meeting in an Irondequoit Starbucks four years ago founded Stand Up Guys.

"Most men are well-intentioned," says co-founder Pete Navratil, who's also the director of mental health services at the Rochester Rehabilitation Center. "But they don't always know what to do. This is an open-your-eyes campaign."

A year ago, a nationwide Father's Day poll by Peter B. Hart Research Associates Inc. reported that two-thirds of men think violence against women is "very" or "fairly" common. A majority, 56 percent, said they believed that a family member, friend or acquaintance has been a victim of domestic violence.

More than a decade ago, while he worked for the Delphi Drug and Alcohol Council, Navratil began collaboration with the Men's Workshop at the Rochester Rehabilitation Center to develop non-violence programming for men.

Stand Up Guys grew out of that experience, and its volunteers now do three or four workshops a month at colleges and high schools, for employer organizations, churches and anyone else willing to listen.

"To be a Stand Up Guy can be as simple as signing a pledge," Navratil says. (You can find that pledge at [www.standupguys.org](http://www.standupguys.org).) But it should also be about speaking up and speaking out.

There are similar efforts elsewhere. Men in Canada have organized a "white ribbon campaign" ([www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca)) to display their commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

And Joe Torre, now the manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, has spoken of his father's violent treatment of his mother. Torre's Safe at Home Foundation is dedicated to curbing violence against women.

Navratil, 50, lives in Webster with his wife, Jennifer Baer. Theirs is a blended family, with five children, three of them grown.

Navratil says he once saw a neighbor try to stop his wife and daughter from driving away. He was loud and aggressive, Navratil says, "and pounded his fists on the car."

He punched through a window, spraying broken shards of glass on both of them.

"I called 911," Navratil says, and the neighbor was arrested. On another occasion, he says, the coach of

one of his son's football teams, trying to push the boys to be more aggressive, said "You look like a bunch of cheerleaders." A lot of times, Navratil says, the worst thing you can call a guy is a girl.

After the practice, Navratil says, he confronted the coach and said, "When you say things like that, you make women and girls of lesser value." The coach, he says, thanked him and said he'd never thought of it that way.

That's why we need Stand Up Guys, Navratil says. We need to create a climate where objecting to domestic violence — starting with demeaning comments — is a guy thing.

It's time for men to speak to men. "It would be great to have men supporting every Take Back the Night march," he says.

And it would be great if, whenever there's news of a domestic homicide, there's a Stand Up Guy telling other men to call 911 if they see a woman in danger, or telling men how they can get help if they fear they could become violent themselves.

"Fathers can have a tremendous impact showing their sons how to treat not just women, but all people with dignity and respect," Navratil says. "That would go a long way toward making a safer community."

What better way for a dad to celebrate Father's Day than by taking that message to heart.

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