

# Stand Up Guys!

By Rick Walther

Intro: I'd like to start today by asking, only the guys, to stand up if they have ever committed violence against a women or girl.

No one? Well that's a relief, but did you know that there were 209,880 victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault in 2004. More women are injured by their partners than by rape, auto accidents and muggings combined! One third of all female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner, compared to 3-4% of male homicide victims. One million women are stalked annually. 1 of 5 women suffered child abuse. 2 of 5 women report sexual or physical assaults.

Is the abuse of women a "women's issue"? Well women are certainly the victims, but it's clearly men that commit the abuse. That is the basis behind an organization called Stand Up Guys.

What is Stand Up Guys?

Their mission is to raise the community's awareness about men's violence against women and girls and to promote gender equality in our community.

SUG is a group of people who recognize that violence against women is not merely a 'women's issue' but an issue for everyone concerned about equality and fairness.

Most importantly SUG believes that men need to STAND UP! and get involved. It's an essential ingredient in the effort to end violence against women and girls, which is almost exclusively caused by men.

When I say 'men's violence against women, that includes domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, gender discrimination, and any other behavior that demeans or devalues women in our society.

Why am I talking about it? I haven't personally abused or witnessed the physical abuse of women. My mother is a strong woman that is recognized as an equal in my family to my father. I too see my wife as an equal in my family.

But as a father I want my boys to know that all people are equal. To see the world through eyes that doesn't judge people by anything other than their words and

actions. When I hear my seven-year-old son say “how can she do that, she’s a girl?”, or my five year see a women in a army uniform say, “I didn’t know girls could be soldiers”, I correct them and point out that women can do anything men can do. It’s this train of thought that allows men to feel superior to women.

I was invited to participate in a panel discussion for this group. Although I was unable to attend, I began to read about this group and it all made sense to me. The simple principle that’s been missing for years when it comes to ending violence against women is changing the way men view women. We can set up safe houses for women and children to go when the man becomes violent, but how about getting to the root of the issue....the violent man.

What can we do? We need to support and strengthen the existing values and beliefs among “well intentioned men” that sexual, physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by men against women and children is wrong and will no longer be tolerated.

We need to appreciate and value the differences between men and women and the treat each other with dignity and respect.

As men, we need to take responsibility for being loving and nurturing. We need to communicate feelings, warmth and genuine care and concern to those people we love and care about. We need to educate our sons and other young men about the responsibility we share as men in ending men’s violence against women.

Being a Stand Up Guy is not about assessing blame or inflicting guilt, it’s about working to get men involved and doing the right thing.

In conclusion, Men’s violence against women will continue in our communities until men take an active part in Standing Up and Speaking Out against the underlying cultural values, attitudes and beliefs that reinforce the message that it is OK to abuse, rape, hit, assault, objectify and control women.

I’d like to end today by asking, only the guys, to stand up if they have an appreciation of what it means to STAND UP.