

The workplace and domestic violence in focus

Experts speak at 'Lunch Box'

By Joe Genco
Eagle Staff Writer

PINE TOWNSHIP, Allegheny County — Domestic violence is commonly used to describe abusive acts by people against their spouses or significant others.

But the term can be misleading because those acts can take place outside the home too, said Susan Nitzberg, associate director of Standing Firm.

"The misconception people at businesses have is 'that takes place in the home, it has nothing to do with me, it's none of my business,'" she said.

Instead of domestic, the organization prefers to use the term "partner violence," she said.

Nitzberg and Darla Barie, volunteer coordinator with Crisis Center North, spoke to business people Wednesday at the Pittsburgh North Regional Chamber's monthly Lunch Box Session.

They discussed the scope of domestic violence, how it can affect

the workplace and how employers can get involved in helping victims seek help.

One of Standing Firm's goals is to spread the message that employers should have policies in place to deal with issues relating to domestic violence, Nitzberg said.

The organization offers free membership to any business, nonprofit organization or governmental entity. Cranberry Township is one member.

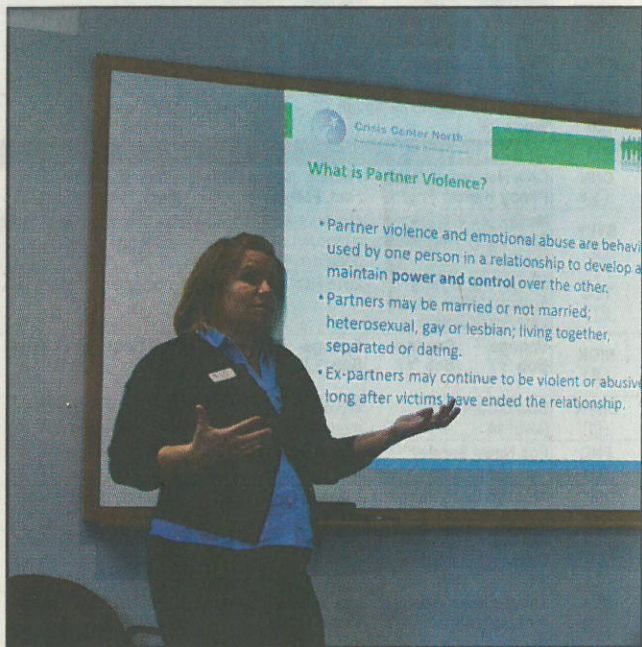
Some of the warning signs a victim of domestic abuse might show are an employee being late to work, leaving work early, seeming nervous, making or receiving mysterious phone calls and coming to work with bruises or other visible injuries, Barie said.

However, co-workers or employers should be careful in how they approach someone who may be a victim, she said.

"Please don't look at an abuse victim and tell them they just need to leave the person," she said.

Instead, you should say: "How can I best help you?" she said.

Crisis Center North is



Darla Barie of Crisis Center North speaks about domestic violence at a monthly "Lunch Box" session.

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based in the North Hills and has a 24-hour hot line and other free services for victims and anyone effected by domestic violence.

People also should know that there is no stereotypical person who commits abuse, though it is more often men, Barie said.

"Most men aren't abusers, but most abusers are men," she said.

Domestic violence is an issue that more companies need to take seriously, Nitzberg said.

National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell provided an example last year of how not to handle a domestic abuse situation with the league's handling

of discipline for running back Ray Rice, who was accused of abusing his fiancée, who later became his wife.

"Don't be like Roger Goodell and the NFL and think 'this is something that will go away; this is something that I don't need to deal with,'" Nitzberg said.

For information about Crisis Center North, visit crisiscenternorth.org. For information about Standing Firm, visit standingfirmswpa.org.

The Lunch Box sessions are free one-hour presentations at the chamber's headquarters on the third Wednesday of the month, said Jim Boltz, chamber executive director.