

TO: David Penticuff, Chronicle-Tribune Managing Editor  
FROM: Linda Wilk, Hands of Hope Director, a division of Family Service Society, Inc.  
RE: Praise for DECA students  
DATE: March 21, 2011

A random survey of 102 Mississinewa High School students by three of their peers revealed that 15 percent of the students admit they are in a violent relationship.

That startling statistic, along with some personal knowledge of teens in abusive relationships, led Seniors Trevor Simpson, Colin Mitchener and Dalton Miller to create a nine minute video about teen dating abuse for their DECA class and competition.

Each of the students told me that they themselves are aware of friends who are in abusive relationships, but the friends either don't recognize it or believe it is normal. Their hope for those friends is that by watching the video they will realize it isn't normal and they will get out.

Colin, Trevor and Dalton also expressed a desire to educate middle school students, commenting that most high school students are set in their relationships, so if they could focus on youth who aren't yet dating, they might be able to stop the abuse before it begins.

What wise words. And a message we as parents can take to heart. It is never too young to educate children about domestic violence, dating violence and healthy relationships. Who better to say that than three college bound senior males from our community.

In watching the nine minute video produced by Trevor Simpson, Colin Mitchener and Dalton Miller, I was impressed by the passion of these young men.

The quality of the video, which included messages from Mississinewa High School teachers and students, was powerful and pointed in its content.

It includes a message for their peers, but it also has a message for adults who might be in a violent or emotionally abusive relationship. It is clear that these three students did their due diligence in putting together this documentary that depicts clearly and concisely what domestic violence is all about.

While a class project, the video I believe will impact students and adults in this community well beyond the grade they received from their teacher.

For students, let alone male students, to take on this tough issue is worth not only mentioning but shouting out from the roof tops.

As an advocate for social change, and knowing that if change is to occur it must begin with MEN and YOUTH, I couldn't be more moved.

I would encourage everyone in Grant County to take time to view the video by going to You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTRXKsj4tnk>

And I would like to personally thank Trevor Simpson, Colin Mitchener and Dalton Miller for choosing to take on this uncomfortable topic and address it boldly.

Congratulations, is also extended to each of the three Seniors who entered the video in the Public Relations category at the State DECA Career Development Conference and received first place. They will now enter the video in the International DECA Career Development Conference in Orlando on April 29 – May 4.

Anyone who would like to view the video and talk briefly to one of the students, please call to register for the free Faith Based Training for Minister's and Youth Workers about teen dating violence, body image and healthy relationships, sponsored by the Mayor's Commission Against Domestic Violence. The FREE workshop is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m., Monday, April 4 in Conference Room 102 at Ivy Tech Community College, 216 S. Commerce Drive, Marion. A light dinner will be provided with pre-registrations received by March 30. To register either email [lwilk@famservices.com](mailto:lwilk@famservices.com) or call Linda Wilk at 662-9971 ext. 123.

Grant County has many reasons to be proud of our talented youth and I am happy to say this is yet another reminder of the caliber of students residing amongst us.