

The MILFORD DAILY NEWS

Wayside program focuses on Brazilians

By Paul Crocetti, DAILY NEWS STAFF
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Thanks to a \$54,000 grant from the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network currently offers a prevention program for men at risk of committing domestic violence.

The Man to Man program provides weekly sessions in both Portuguese and English in Milford and just Portuguese in Marlborough, said Dr. Percy Andreazi, a mental health counselor at Wayside.

"The main service of the program is to help men, to prevent violence," said Andreazi, who has made presentations about the program in community buildings such as churches. "There is a gap in the system. There is no service for men before committing violence.

"This program does not excuse violence. Violence must be punished. But we want to prevent violence, act before violence occurs."

Marlborough and Milford have the highest rates of civil restraining orders compared to other area communities, according to the 2005 MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation data book. Officials noted that restraining orders only indicate who has reported trouble.

"There's more of a willingness to report because they know they will get help," said Police Chief Thomas O'Loughlin. "You may not see that in other communities."

The police department will be working closely with Wayside concerning the new program, O'Loughlin said. "Sometimes we get a call about a fight that's not physical, but heated," he said, noting that this type of situation may not necessarily lead to charges. "This offers a chance to refer the man to another program. We hope to prevent them from reaching the level of violence, from getting to the point of enforcing law."

Men are often referred to the program by different types of people, from police officers to wives, Andreazi said. During the sessions, counselors have discussions with men about anger, the dynamics of violence, impulse control, depression and alcohol control, Andreazi said. There are many signs of a man with violent characteristics, he said.

"They're easily frustrated, jealous, suspicious, argumentative, impulsive and - this is key - he learned aggression in the family," Andreazi said. "He probably had a history of violence in the family."

At-risk men often isolate themselves, he said.

"They don't look for help, they deny," said Andreazi, adding that anyone interested from surrounding towns can participate in the free service. "The program offers just this - help for men when they're desperate and having problems."

Andreazi, who was a doctor in Brazil for 20 years before moving here eight years ago, said it is often difficult for Brazilian men to make the transition to this country. "They come from a small town where the man has all the power," Andreazi said. "When they come here, the women assimilate to the culture, working outside and making money. The men become suspicious,

isolated, angry. It's an issue of power and control. They need to understand they need to change their ways."

Many Brazilian men have shown interest in the program, Andreazi said.

It may be a little early to judge how well the service is working, according to O'Loughlin.

"The goals make a lot of sense. We'll look at the data once it's up and running, and look at the successes," he said. "Wayside has programs that have proven to be valuable. To us, it's helpful to have that resource."

Education and awareness are important in preventing domestic violence, said Debra Robbin, of Jane Doe, Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence.

"There are many deterrents to domestic violence. This is just one way that's important," said Robbin, the director of membership and education for the company. "I think bringing men together to talk about this issue is a really important opportunity."