

## Gloucester Men Against Domestic Abuse

Rev. Bonnie M. Orth, Amsterdam, NY

Co-Moderator of Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence (PADVN)

As you enter and leave Gloucester, Massachusetts, you may notice the street signs identifying Gloucester as a domestic violence free zone. You will also find these signs located at the police station, the high school, at city hall and at all major intersections in town. In Gloucester, as in many communities across the country, there is a coalition working together to address domestic violence and one of the members of the coalition in Gloucester is Men Against Domestic Abuse (GMADA). This organization started with men in the community realizing that in order to end domestic violence, they must take a stand, publicly state their belief that “Strong Men Don’t Bully” and take a pro-active approach.

GMADA began with a campaign intentionally contacting men in the community working in all different occupations asking them if they would sign their name to a document stating their opposition to domestic abuse. In 2002, GMADA sponsored a billboard installed across from a popular bar stating “Strong Men Don’t Bully” with the background of the names of over 500 Gloucester men supporting GMADA.

The model for their program is based on 14 underlying principles.

1. **The silence has to end.** They believe that if the male culture silently tolerates abuse it will never end.
2. **Location, location, location.** If men speak out locally it will be more effective than working on a regional or national level.
3. **What is in a name?** Giving the organization a local name allows the group to have an ongoing presence in the community.
4. **The men are there.** Their experience has shown that many men are just waiting for a vehicle to express themselves about domestic abuse.
5. **No names without contact information.** As they gathered names of men around the community, they found that obtaining addresses, phone numbers and/or emails allowed them future contact.
6. **Speaking out as “We.”** GMADA states that speaking out as “We” will be more effective than speaking in an accusatory tone to abusers because it honors the fact that we all have work to do.
7. **Domestic Abuse-not just Domestic Violence.** When they include name-calling, insults, mockery, manipulative silence, etc., men are able to see that they are often part of the problem.
8. **Each community in its own way.** GMADA has participated in parades, community festivals, signature ads in the newspaper, posters, rallies, bumper stickers and billboard

messages in Gloucester. They realize that each community may have its own unique vehicle for responding and they offer their story as a model.

9. **No One Time Messages.** Action addressing domestic abuse must be sustained to be effective. They are continually exploring new ideas.
10. **Diversity.** GMADA believes that speaking out in a community must reflect its particular ethnic, racial and economic diversity.
11. **Conversation.** Experience has shown GMADA that conversation with men is more effective than mailings.
12. **Many men prefer action to discussion.** Men are more apt to talk during an activity rather than attending meetings to talk about issues of masculinity and domestic violence.
13. **Keep it simple!** GMADA states what is needed most from men is not complicated and can be simple, “Can you join with the rest of us in saying, ‘Men cannot be strong by abusing women and children?’”
14. **Celebration.** The work is serious but GMADA says that they can convey a strong, clear message against abuse and at the same time celebrate coming together to express their capacity to be caring and loving.

To find out more about Gloucester Men Against Domestic Abuse, visit their website, [www.strongmendontbully.com](http://www.strongmendontbully.com) detailing their work and offering suggestions for other communities wanting to use their model or contact GMADA Coordinator, Willy Greenbaum, at [dontbully@strongmendontbully.com](mailto:dontbully@strongmendontbully.com)