

**This article is being presented courtesy of The Gardner Domestic Violence Task Force of which I am a member. The purpose of this and other articles to be provided is to educate, support, and start needed conversations around this corrosive, humiliating and deadly topic of Domestic Violence. The recent murder/suicide is evidence of this. My goal is to give validation and sense of hope to those who have been affect**

**After much thought, I have decided to present my unique story as a survivor of Domestic Abuse. I went through two situations: one due to alcoholism, adultery, and family neglect. The abuse was emotional and verbal and had a lifetime effect on myself and my children. I live with guilt that I let the abuse go on for so long. Many women and men out there can identify with this. What I am going to focus on is the second story of abuse I underwent. I want you to know that I do not fit into the stereotype of typical victim. I am a white, older professional woman with a good job, owned a home, and presented as a competent helping person to those I worked with. Allotted space for the article does not allow for a lengthy depiction of my life during a very intense 18 months, but I will summarize the details of my story. Mine involved the whole family, not just my husband. The main perpetrator was my stepdaughters' boyfriend once he moved into the home. Bottom line was I was accused of causing a bankruptcy situation through selfish shopping sprees and "secret purchases" which they found by scouring my bank account (none of which was true). My prison was my bedroom where I found peace. I could not visit friends, was driven to the gas station, haunted by calls if not home right from work. I was lazy, stupid, and laughed at and mocked. I stayed to protect a grandson I loved who once told me they would be homeless because of me. The police told me to be mature and get along with these people. When cameras were set up, to monitor my food intake, and care of my dog. I safely escaped. As I look back, I minimized things, but I had become depressed, and suicidal during those days, friends told me they feared for my life. Now I am free from the power and control. I am a survivor now devoting my time and energy to this cause. So, join us on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall while the Mayor reads off the Proclamation for Domestic Violence.**