



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo Hosts Domestic Violence Event to Highlight Critical Issue

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. October 18, 2024

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NYPD Sergeant Special Assignment Dawana Castro of the Chief of Department Domestic Violence Unit, explains how law enforcement addresses domestic violence.

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. held an informative event in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, bringing together community members, experts, and advocates to shed light on the pervasive issue of domestic violence. The event took place at the co-host Ozone Park Tudor Civic Association meeting where attendees engaged in thoughtful discussions and heard from key speakers, including representatives from Safe Horizon and the NYPD Domestic Violence Unit.

“Domestic violence is a silent epidemic that affects too many families in our communities. It’s crucial that we come together to raise awareness, provide support, and advocate for those in need,” Addabbo said. “We must ensure that every victim knows they are not alone and that there are resources available to help them escape the cycle of violence. We should encourage all individuals regardless of their religion or ethnic background to come forward if they are being victimized by domestic violence.”

Both women and men attended the event with some even sharing their own domestic violence stories, including Ariana Vee, Miss Skeldon Universe Guyana. “I did not have the

financial stability to leave,” Vee said. “I was controlled in every aspect of my life – financially, physically, verbally.”

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence. In New York City alone, the NYPD received over 66,000 domestic violence-related calls in the past year, highlighting the urgent need for ongoing education and intervention efforts.

The event featured guest speakers Camille Pajor, Senior Advocate, in the Special Victims Division of Safe Horizon and NYPD Sergeant Special Assignment Dawana Castro of the Chief of Department Domestic Violence Unit. Both stressed that power, control and intimidation are key elements of domestic violence. They said control can be physical violence, sexual violence, emotional or psychological abuse, stalking, financial abuse (e.g., withholding money, ruining credit, stopping a partner from getting or keeping a job), and digital (on social media and the Internet).

In her presentation about Safe Horizon, Pajor spoke about how the organization is dedicated to helping victims of crime and abuse. It provides a range of services, including crisis counseling, legal advocacy, and safe shelter for those who are fleeing violence. They even have a 24-hour hotline where victims can seek help anonymously.

“Every year, thousands of individuals and families turn to Safe Horizon for help,” Pajor said. “It’s essential that we break the stigma surrounding domestic violence and encourage victims to seek the help they deserve.”

Sergeant Castro of the NYPD Domestic Violence Unit spoke about the tools law enforcement uses to combat domestic violence. It has dedicated officers to handle sensitive situations, and the unit focuses on providing immediate assistance to victims, confirming their safety,

and holding offenders accountable. She said their mission is to protect the vulnerable and to ensure that every victim feels empowered to come forward.

“It takes a village, not just law enforcement,” Castro said. “It takes that neighbor, it takes that loved one, it takes that close friend. It really takes a village to get that information out there and to share it, so that everyone knows they are not alone in this process.”

“Sometimes they think they are in love and love is enough to conquer all,” Castro said of domestic violence victims. “We can’t judge them for not leaving, but we can offer help.”

Senator Addabbo concluded the event by urging everyone to act. “Let’s not just talk about the problem; let’s be part of the solution,” Addabbo said. “I encourage all of you to learn how you can support victims, whether through volunteering, donating, or simply spreading awareness. Together, we can make a difference.”

Videos from the Domestic Violence Event are available on Senator Addabbo’s YouTube Channel at the links below:

<https://youtu.be/guCVvTYjgTM>

<https://youtu.be/hqdcpcLdzZU>

<https://youtu.be/iFZqeKLaeYA>