



## Women's Center Update: Televised wrestling promotes violence against women

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In June 2007, Chris Benoit, a world-famous wrestler, murdered his son and wife and then took his own life. His suicide has led many to think about the cause for his actions. Media coverage has proposed possible brain injuries due to concussions, and the possibility of steroid use as the cause for of his violent actions.

What has been ignored is the fact that violence and humiliation of women is common within World Wrestling Entertainment. Considering that one in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, can society continue to ignore the violence toward women in wrestling and its influence amongst young males? Research regarding media's influence on social customs has shown that repeated viewing of violence in the media causes violence toward women to become acceptable and normal in the minds of viewers and in society.

Wrestling is extremely popular among young men. Within WWE, masculinity is shown to young viewers as actions that dominate, control, sexualize, and humiliate women. These actions also show verbal, physical, and sexual aggression toward women. Seeing women put down in this way sends messages to young men that treating women violently and disrespectfully is no big deal, normal, and even entertaining.

Seeing women as sex objects combined with violence is very dangerous for young male viewers, who may take these messages away with them in into their lives, whether they are aware of it or not. Sexual arousal for young boys becomes linked to the defeat of women, as they watch submissive women being overthrown by dominant, white men. Young men regularly watching women be bullied by men are learning that this behavior is okay. Given all the violent images they receive, can these young men see the females in their lives as equals?

Society needs to change the messages sent to young men, in order to prevent violence toward women. When prevention is focused on young men, this is called primary prevention. South Lake Tahoe Women's Center has two programs aimed at primary prevention. One is a group counseling Violence Interruption Program aimed at teens. The other primary prevention program is the MyStrength campaign, which is aimed at male youth. To find out more about these programs, please contact the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center at (530) 544-2118 or stop by our office at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd., across from South Tahoe Middle School. South Lake Tahoe Women's Center business office was financed through a low-cost loan from the Rural Community Assistance Corporation

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