



For many Middle Tennesseans, the Covid-19 Pandemic created circumstances and challenges that were foreign and logistically challenging. Schools and daycare centers closing, offices closing, stores and restaurants closing — a tumultuous and life-threatening change in our day to day lives that arrived without warning and settled in like a crippling ice storm.

But the isolation, threats and uncertainty that Covid-19 introduced to many of us was anything but foreign to victims of domestic violence. Those feelings are part of everyday life for individuals and family members who live with violence, week in and week out. Those feelings follow them every minute of every day as they live behind a different kind of mask to simply endure and survive a disease that takes a human form.

Many people have become reacquainted with family and friends during the pandemic. Their lives have slowed and they came to the realization, even when communicating from afar, that they had forgotten the value and importance of those close to them in the midst of their busy schedules. Imagine now coming to the realization that you are locked in with the person who beats or belittles you. Instead of walking through your house looking for home improvement projects, you tip toe through it on socked feet, hoping not to draw attention to yourself or your children. Imagine instead of planning an outing to simply get a change of pace, you had to plan an escape route in the event that things got dangerously out of control. If this sounds like a new release on Netflix, that's because it very much resembles one. Only the reality is not streaming. It's real.

Whether you realize it or not, you know someone who has been involved in a domestic violence situation. You know someone because domestic violence is pervasive in communities everywhere. It does not always take the form of battering. It might be about control or manipulation. And it does not discriminate based on age, race, or household income. The idea that domestic violence discriminates on any basis is a myth, and one that needs to be dispelled.

If you are forced to make an escape from a domestic violence situation in Williamson County, you will likely need Bridges. Bridges Domestic Violence Center is the non-profit organization that receives victims of domestic violence and shelters them until they are safely back on their feet. And right now, Bridges needs your help. The operational budget for a full-service shelter is extremely demanding and with the current situation of self-isolation, that demand is growing.

If you can give, please do. Small amounts are much appreciated and larger monetary gifts will be allocated to bigger projects such as transitional housing and programming to help those in shelter find a clear path forward. And when your isolation is mandated by violence, not self-imposed, helping someone find a path forward is the greatest gift you can bestow.

Be safe as we navigate Covid-19. Relish the time that you have with your loved ones, but if you know someone in need of help please let them know about our services which include a physical shelter, crisis response teams and support groups, child and court advocacy, bi-lingual outreach, transitional housing and batterer's intervention. To learn how you can support this critical organization, call 615-599-5777 (24/7), email info@bridgesdvc.org or visit us online at www.bridgesdvc.org.