

# Guest Commentary - Domestic Violence Awareness Month

**By Linda Oberhaus, CEO**  
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children

IMMOKALEE — On Sept. 4, 2020, Cindy Peel was found stabbed to death in her upscale home in the City of Naples. Officials reported she was killed by her husband, Robert Barnes, who then took his own life with a knife.

Ironically, only one television outlet covered the crime. Buried on page 10 in the local daily newspaper, Cindy's murder fell second to news of Tigertail Beach improvements. If a man had stabbed a stranger to death in downtown Naples, we would have read about it for days, but when he kills his wife inside their home, it doesn't even merit a sidebar.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month and this horrific crime is reminder that domestic violence does not discriminate; it crosses all age, ethnic, economic, and geographic boundaries. Cindy Peel's life was taken by the very person to whom she once entrusted it and in the very place she should have been the safest – her home.

Even before COVID-19, domestic violence was on the rise in Collier County. According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Collier County had 39 more domestic violence offenses in 2019 than 2018, including one murder, 41

forcible rapes and 228 aggravated assaults. Thousands more went unreported.

It is up to each of us to be vigilant for the signs of domestic violence. Failure to recognize and report these crimes puts the entire community at risk because violence at home does not stop at the front door. It infects our workplaces, schools, social circles and places of worship. It costs us millions of dollars in medical care, social services and lost wages.

Cindy Peel was a mother, a grandmother and a talented artist who cared deeply about her community. Today, according to national statistics, she will be joined in death by three more women. Outside of their families and immediate communities, few will hear anything about their murders. And when we do learn of it, the news value will somehow be minimized by the fact that the killer was a spouse and not a random stranger.

The truth is, no one is safe from domestic violence. It is a crime against all of us, for if we cannot end violence in our homes, we will never end violence in our community.

If you know someone affected by domestic violence, call The Shelter's 24-hour crisis hotline at 239-775-1101. For more information on how to recognize and act on the signs of domestic violence, go online to [naplesshelter.org/help](http://naplesshelter.org/help)

## Tips to keep you safe during Halloween and Día de los Muertos

NAPLES — The Florida Department of Health in Collier County (DOH-Collier) recommends residents and visitors celebrate a healthy fall season. The following tips will help keep you and your family safe while celebrating Halloween and Día de los Muertos this year.

Many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses, including COVID-19. There are several safe ways to celebrate Halloween. The Halloween safety tips below can help keep you and your family safe.

### Celebrate at home!:

- Watch spooky movies.
- Create a scavenger hunt for members of your household.
- Host a virtual Halloween costume contest.
- Carve pumpkins with members of your household.
- Host an online party.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers traditional trick-or-treating where children go door-to-door for candy as a higher risk activity for spreading viruses. If you and your family decide to go trick-or-treating this year, practice these tips to help prevent the spread of viruses, including COVID-19.

- Wear a mask or cloth face covering. A

costume mask is not a substitute.

- Avoid crowds.
  - Use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
  - Wash hands before and after eating.
  - If you are planning on giving out treats leave individually wrapped goodie bags on a table for children to take.
  - Continue to social distance.
- It is important to avoid the following:
- Large gatherings; per the State Surgeon General's Public Health Advisory avoid gatherings of 10 or larger.
  - Crowded indoor events.
  - Haunted houses where people may be crowded together and screaming.
  - Hayrides with people who are not in your household.

Día de los Muertos festivities take place on November 1st and 2nd. Traditional activities for Día de los Muertos can put you at a higher risk for exposure to viruses, including COVID-19.

Celebrating with alternative ways can help keep you and your family safe.

### Safe ways to celebrate Día de los Muertos include the following:

- Honor your loved ones at your home.
- Set out pillows and blankets in your

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**HOCUS-POCUS**  
Halloween Fun

*2020 has been a turbulent year, and we would like to have a little Halloween fun by showing off cute kids in their Halloween costumes!*

**Submit a photo of your kids in their Halloween costume!**

**Photos will be published in your community newspaper on November 4th or 5th!**

**A photo gallery will be featured online!**

**Submission Deadline: Sat., Oct 31<sup>st</sup>**

*Submit your photo online at [southcentralfloralife.com/contest](http://southcentralfloralife.com/contest)*

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