

Thank you to Robin Read, the NFWL and Liz Claiborne Inc for inviting me here today. My name is Ann Burke and almost 6 years ago, my 23 yr old daughter Lindsay was murdered by an ex-boyfriend. Since that time my family founded the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, by which we support dating violence education by offering trainings to teachers and parents. And as many of you know, working separately from the Fund, our family and friends worked with then AG Patrick Lynch of RI, to pass the Lindsay Ann Burke Act, the first comprehensive dating violence education law in our nation.

In thinking about the importance and strength of partnerships, I can't help but think back to two previous conversations. The first was with Jane Randel of Liz Claiborne & Anne Glauber of Ruder Finn. During that conversation we discussed how we could make significant strides in the world of dating violence prevention. We talked about forming partnerships with key organizations and engaging parents – concerned parents as well as courageous parents whose children had been victims of dating violence. That conversation led to the beginning of the Love Is Not Abuse Coalition, of which I am co-director and founder, and whose members promote dating violence education within their states.

The second conversation was with Robin Read, a couple of years ago when I first spoke at an NFWL conference. As we talked about how crucial it was to educate our youth about dating violence, she looked me right in the eye and said, "Don't worry, Ann, the women legislators will get the job done." And a few years later, we now have 22 states that have passed some form of dating violence education legislation, and 7 of those have very strong pieces of legislation. You are getting the job done.

And you are saving lives . Those laws are saving lives and because of them education in schools is helping teens to recognize and safely remove themselves from abusive relationships. How do I know this is happening? As a health teacher I had many first hand experiences hearing from my own students in the past. Just recently, I received an email from a health teacher in RI. He told me that after he finished teaching his unit on dating violence, a female student walked up to him after class, pulled up the sleeve of her shirt exposing several bruises and said "This is what my boyfriend did to me."

Yes, prevention through education works, and the partnerships we have formed have helped made this possible. So thank you, to NFWL, Liz Claiborne, Ruder Finn, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Verizon Foundation. And a special thank you to the parents who have lost children to dating violence victimization, who have worked as our partners, who have joined the Love Is Not Abuse Coalition and advocate for the prevention of dating violence through education. They work with schools and teachers in their states, and they support the efforts of our women legislators. This is no easy task for them. They do this work because they firmly believe that dating violence education saves lives.

One such parent is Bobbi Sudberry. I met Bobbi via email several years ago, and I am honored to have met her in person this week. Bobbi is an accomplished mother of five, a wife, and President of Kaity's Way, a non-profit she co-founded with her husband, in honor of their daughter Kaitlyn Marie Sudberry, who, at the age of 17, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. The mission of Kaity's Way is to promote understanding and educate the community to lessen the incidence of violence through PEACE ( Patience, Empathy, Acceptance, Caring & Equality). To promote public awareness, Bobbi shares Kaity's Story. Bobbi is a survivor on many levels. She faced the murder of her daughter, and she is a survivor of domestic abuse and breast cancer. She draws upon this path of survival and determination, to help others whenever the need arises. We are fortunate to have Bobbi here with us today. It is my pleasure to introduce to you, Bobbi Sudberry.