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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Every February we do something big to bring awareness
to the issue of teen dating abuse and the importance
of helping teens build loving, healthy friendships and relationships.**

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., January 10, 2019 - February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness month! It's a national effort carried on by youth activists, community leaders, and national and local organizations, to raise awareness about abuse in teen relationships and promote programs that prevent it.

What is LOVE, Youth Wellness Connection high school clubs, and Domestic Violence Solutions launch the **Love Yourself Campaign** in our local high schools to bring awareness to healthy dating and friendships.

Dating violence is more common than many people think. One in three teens in the U.S. will experience physical, sexual or emotional abuse by someone they are in a relationship with before they become adults. These first love experiences set a young person up for the rest of their lives and it is how they learn to define intimate relationships.

Helping teens build healthy relationship skills that focus on boundaries, respect, kindness, consent, and respectful communication are key factors in preventing teen dating violence. And creating strong support networks give teens places to share experiences in a trusted space while fostering resiliency.

Help us spread awareness and stop dating abuse before it starts!

The Youth Wellness Council [YWC] is a high school leadership program of the Mental Wellness Center that educates, empowers and engages students. Students meet weekly at each high school to raise awareness and reduce stigma around issues such as unhealthy relationships that can impact mental health. The LOVE YOURSELF Campaign activities include:

- High School Wide Poster Distribution (Carpinteria through Goleta) - February 1
- National School Announcement - February 11
- Love yourself high school outreach with lunch tabling and activities - February 14
- Real Stories on Instagram - February 15

Christy Stillwell M.A. Psy., founder and executive director of What is LOVE explains, *“Dating abuse prevention is a difficult topic to approach; that’s where What is LOVE can help. We have a variety of researched programs and materials that can be implemented in all school and community settings”.*

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About What Is LOVE

What is LOVE offers evidenced-based programming to help teens build healthy loving relationship skills and prevent dating violence to every high school in Santa Barbara County. We serve 25,000 students, parents, and teachers each year with comprehensive assessment of current school safety measures and how we can enhance and support sustainable physical, emotional, digital, and sexual abuse prevention education. Programming includes school-based workshops, student leadership trainings, and professional learning for school staff, and parents. All programming is available in English and Spanish.

What is LOVE prevention programs:

- Strengthen students' social emotional skills
- Increase students', parents' and educators' ability to identify abuse
- Increase students' ability to ask for help
- Connect students to school and community resources

Learn more about our work at info@whatisLOVEteens.org or visit our website whatisLOVEteens.org.

About Mental Wellness Center

The Mental Wellness Center (MWC) is the non-profit organization that recognizes mental illness is a community matter affecting us all. Providing education and support, MWC is dedicated to meeting the immediate and future needs of our Youth, Adults, Families, and the greater Community. Visit mentalwellnesscenter.org for more information.

Learn more about Youth Wellness Connection at wcclubs.org or contact Rachael at Coordinator@wcclubs.org.

About Domestic Violence Solutions

Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County is dedicated to ending the cycle of domestic violence by providing prevention and intervention services, emotional support and advocacy to those in crisis, and playing a leadership role in effecting social change.

Learn more about DVS at dvsolutions.org or contact Julia Black, Marketing & Communications Officer at juliab@dvsolutions.org or 805-963-4458 x 110.