

In the Plainfield High gymnasium last month, a crowd of Hoosiers waited for Sen. Barack Obama to start his town hall meeting.

*(audio of Obama supporters chanting cheering etc... fades under Sarah)*

After his speech, he held a question-and-answer session. The first questioner was Megan Hazelschwart, a graduate student studying the effect of children's exposure to domestic violence. She wanted to know what Sen. Obama was going to do to stop violence against women and their children.

I was surprised at her question. It wasn't about the economy, it wasn't about Iraq; it was about another issue that unfortunately has lacked attention.

Obama: *"I will commit as president to make sure that our Department of Health and Human Services is making this one of our top priorities, because it has an effect that lingers. It's not just the immediate effect of the violence, it is the ongoing memories particularly when it comes to children that then gets passed on generation to generation, and we have to break those cycles.*

*"So giving more money, number one. Number 2, identifying what programs are working most effectively and trying to duplicate those programs around the country. Those are going to be absolutely critical.*

*"But the other thing I think that the president has to do, and I intend to do as president, is to lift up these stories and use the bully pulpit to inform people about what a quiet crisis this is. One last point I want to make on this.*

*Part of the reason many women stay in abusive relationships is because of economics. And so making sure that women are paid an equal wage. Making sure our girls get the same educational opportunities, so that they have freedom that is gonna be just as important. And we have to enforce those laws that are on the books. "*

Looking around me I saw women from a variety of backgrounds and wondered, "How many of them have been subject to domestic violence?"

Quite a few, according to the Family Violence Prevention Fund: Of the almost 3.5 million violent crimes committed nationally against family members, 49 percent of these were crimes against spouses.

I wonder how many women are concerned, like Megan, about the effect domestic violence is having on children. I wonder how many were encouraged by Sen. Obama's remarks.

As a 15-year-old, I have a close emotional tie to this issue because I volunteer at Sheltering Wings, a nonprofit in Danville that houses women and children who are escaping domestic abuse. I've been volunteering for the past seven years, leading annual clothing drives and helping with administrative work.

One thing I've noticed while volunteering is the fact that mothers are very protective of their children never letting them out of their sight. I have learned a lot about what Sen.

Obama calls a “quiet crisis.” I think the women at the shelter would be encouraged and relieved by Obama’s words about prioritizing domestic violence.

For Y-Press, I’m Sarah Zabel.