

Campus Rape Prevention Requires Awareness

BY ERICA STEINER

While the issue of rape has been discussed with unprecedented frankness over the past few years, few efforts have been undertaken to address the problem of rape on college campuses.

University programs which lead the nation in the fight against rape not only provide crisis intervention services, but educate people about sexual assault, according to Bernice Sandler of the National Coalition for Women's Education.

Sandler said that education programs are clearly the most effective answer to the problem, but only a handful of schools have adopted them. The University of California at Santa Barbara's rape prevention peer educators reach about two-thirds of the school's 18,000 students each year, according to Gary White, the program's director.

The group's peer educators performs plays about issues of sexual assault to groups both on and off campus, and then follow-up with audience members about

such issues as gender roles, socialization and sexuality.

"Our main goal is to communicate with people," White said. "We want to teach people that it's okay for women to be sexual and for men to have limits and to not be sexual. We want people to know about and to consider society's double-standard and to stop buying into the rape culture."

The group targets residence halls, fraternities, sororities, athletes, campus groups, high schools, and other colleges. "The program works in the reverse of the Reagan philosophy," said White. "It has a grassroots, trickle-up effect."

The Rape Prevention Education Program at UCSB, which has been in place since 1979, also offers crisis intervention services and an escort service around the campus.

Brown University's version of theatre outreach emphasizes the complexities of sexual interaction in a play about assault, "When a Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss," created by the school's own Sexual Assault Prevention Educa-

tion.

"The play enacts a rape," said Toby Simon, founder of SAPE, "but not a hit-you-over-the-head clear rape. We deliberately have her not say no, but slow down."

Simon said the program has enjoyed enormous success. "After our first training, we got requests to perform at other high schools and colleges," he said. "Over the last four years, SAPE has been expanding, and we now perform our plays all along the eastern seaboard."

The program was founded in 1991 in response to growing tension and anger on campus about rape, according to Kirsten Linford, a peer educator.

"Women were very upset on campus about a lack of support from the administration," she said. "Sexual harassment and abuse reports were being ignored—so students started the 'rape list,' a list of names written on a bathroom wall by women stating the names of men around campus

they knew were rapists. That's when Toby Simon stepped in and started SAPE."

The University of Rochester's Coalition Against Sexual Harassment and Assault is a small student-run group with a mission "to teach the community what they need to know about sexual assault," according to Roseanne Gil, a CASHA peer educator.

Peer educators from CASHA present movies and concerts, set up information booths and perform skits around campus and in the community. They are currently working on "The Clothesline Project," a collaborative installation of decorated tee-shirts in memoriam of the many female victims of violence.

CASHA was formed in 1991 by students concerned that something more needed to be done about the problem of acquaint-

tance rape among students. The group almost shut down in 1992, when the majority of its members graduated, but has since tripled its membership.

"Personally," Gil said, "I feel like we've made a very positive impact on people."

In addition to CASHA, the University of Rochester has its own peer health education program, which facilitates communication between the sexes; runs a rape crisis hotline; provides counseling and mental health services; and convenes a rape awareness and education committee to help coordinate the various campus groups.

For information on date and acquaintance rape, please contact Rochelle Sax at 895-4745 or NOW at 870-3000 (after Nov. 12, the new number is 387-75820).

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