

Local groups attack problem of sexual abuse

Sharon Barris
Capital Times Staff

One night a woman fled from her home in a robe and bedroom slippers with a dime in her pocket. Her only hope was to reach a pay phone where she could cry for help and protection from her abusive husband. But when she reached the phone, she realized she had no one to call.

From this incident, an organization was formed to protect abused women and give them a place to turn, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Judy Yupcavage, public education specialist for the coalition, said the organization's purpose is to "provide services society was failing to provide."

Fortunately, services like these are available today for victims of violence. Some of these services, such as the coalition, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, the YWCA Rape Crisis Services and Penn State Harrisburg's own counseling services gathered in a workshop on violence against women, held Nov. 9 at Penn State Harrisburg.

The groups discussed the threats to women in the past and the present as well as the services that are provided to women in need.

According to Yupcavage, the coalition took 150,000 calls from abused women last year. Services such as counseling and shelter were provided to 80,000 of those victims.

Shelter space for abused women is always limited and in demand, so some women are placed in homeless shelters.

"At least it is a safe place, away from abuse," Yupcavage said.

Any woman who was an abuse victim was usually removed from her home until 1988, when the Protection from Abuse Laws were amended.

The amendment gave victims the opportunity to place a restraining order on the abuser, requiring him to leave the home.

The process has come a long way. In fact, it has only been during the past 10 years that a husband who abused his wife was considered a criminal.

When the law did not step in to help the women, they helped themselves.

Yupcavage recalled one young girl who was repeatedly abused by her father. The girl shot and killed her father in self-defense, but will sit in a jail cell for the majority of her life.

"She is paying a price twice," Yupcavage said. "Our goal is to try to change attitudes in society to stop such tragedies. The attitudes will not change until the issues of battering, rape and sexual assault are confronted by everyone."

According to Linda Meashey of counseling services, Penn State Harrisburg tries to reduce the risk of violence toward women by providing a safe physical environment and an attitude of respect and protection.

Women are encouraged to use the escort service when walking to the parking

lot at night. In addition, campus police regularly patrol the dorms and building areas.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated at Penn State, said Meashey. The student handbook explains the rules and consequences to students and faculty. Meashey said these regulations are upheld at all times.

The most important thing to remember

is that there will always be a risk of violence toward women. One must take precautions and realize that it can happen.

Fortunately, more and more services are provided by people who care. State and federal governments are getting involved in the fight against violence against women.

"After all," said Yupcavage, "this is an issue for all of us to deal with."



Photo by Karen Putt

Kevin DeWitt, of Students For a Quality Library, explains the group's petition to Stacey Devine, secretary of the Student Government Association, during a block walk through Meade Heights. The walk helped the group gain about 400 student signatures supporting the group's demands for library improvements.

Witmer, from page 1

details surrounding the investigation.

Toni Leggett, instructor of criminal justice at Penn State Harrisburg, said courts and judges frequently prepare plea agreements when the criminal can make restitution. Leggett said the purpose of restitution is "making the victim whole again."

"If Penn State gets the money back, technically they are considered whole again," Leggett said.

Leggett said the punishment is also reflective of what happens with white-

collar criminals.

In addition to his position at the university, Witmer was a Londonderry Twp. supervisor. He resigned from the township governing board in April, shortly before his arrest, citing conflicts with his new job, the Patriot-News said.

Of Witmer's work at the university, South said, "He'd been rated as a very highly effective manager."

Leggett said, "He caused no pain and suffering, no bloodletting. But that doesn't mean he hasn't caused a lot of harm." White-collar criminals, she said, "Tend to leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth."

PREGNANT
and
you didn't mean to be?

Who will
listen and really
understand how
scared and
worried you
are?

Birthright

233-8666



Accepting Penn State Harrisburg Students, Faculty, Staff & Referrals

Susquehanna Institute

Comprehensive, Personal, Academic, Vocational and Educational Counseling and Psychological Services

- Vocational & Career Transition Counseling
- Marriage & Family Counseling
- Psychiatric, Medical and Legal Consultation Available
- Educational Planning and Study Skills
- Children, Adolescence, Adults
- Personal Counseling & Psychotherapy
- Blended /Step Families
- Psychological Testing
- Substance Abuse/ACOA's
- Singles/Couples
- Sexual Abuse

232-4900

24 hours, 7 days a week

Dr. Edward S. Beck, CCMHC, NCC, Director
Licensed Psychologists, Social Workers & Counselors
serving the Penn State Harrisburg community lovingly and professionally since 1972

Hours By Appointment
Evening & Weekend Appointments
Most Insurances Accepted
Affordable sliding-fee scale
Freechoice @... the low-cost alternative to
Healthpass, Prudential and Health America

Beaufort Professional Center
1820 Linglestown Road, Suite 2
Harrisburg, PA 17110-3339