

Session stresses AIDS awareness

Matt Hunt
Capital Times Staff

A member of the South Central AIDS Assistance Network (SCAAN) met with students and faculty on Jan. 30, in the Gallery Lounge to present information about the disease in a program entitled, "Sex, Lies and AIDS."

Kate Searfoss, coordinator of Community Health Education at SCAAN, spoke about the HIV virus, AIDS and its related symptoms, and measures people can take to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease.

According to Searfoss, the HIV virus attaches to the outside of the T-4 cell, the cell which directs B cells to produce antibodies. The virus injects its own genetic information and alters it, causing the cell not to produce antibodies. As the virus invades the cell, it will rupture and infect other cells.

"By attacking the T-cells, the virus disrupts our immune system," Searfoss said, "making us more susceptible to disease."

She said the virus is passed by the interchange of bodily fluids; specifically blood, semen, and vaginal/cervical fluid. Searfoss said that saliva, tears, perspiration, urine and feces do not have a high enough concentration of the virus to infect someone.

According to Searfoss, there are various opinions on whether or not breast milk can pass the virus from mother to child.

"Breast milk is considered by some to be one of the danger fluids," Searfoss said, "while others do not believe it has a high

enough concentration to pass the virus."

AIDS is most commonly passed by unprotected sex, but can also be contracted by sharing needles for intravenous drugs or those used for tattoos. And more recently, a large number of children are being born to mothers who are infected, Searfoss said.

She advised that people remember anyone can be struck by the HIV virus.

"It doesn't care who you are or what you do," Searfoss said. "HIV is very, very smart, but it's a wimp. It needs our help to create an infection."

Searfoss offered the following tips for AIDS prevention: assume everyone is infected, always use condoms during intercourse, do not share needles with anyone, and use "universal" precautions consistently.

Searfoss said while common sense is an essential for protection against the virus, but that paranoia should not overtake a person's life.

"If someone's standing there with an arterial cut, squirting blood everywhere, I'm not going to stand there and check to see if I have any hangnails," she said.

Searfoss advised using some kind of barrier; rubber gloves or heavy cloth, to keep from coming into direct contact with another person's blood.

On the issue of safe sex, Searfoss said at this point, the best defense is still the condom. She said that not enough people believe and practice this method.

"Our best defense is only as good as our ability and motivation to use it."

Corey Boyel, a junior behavioral science major who attended the program, said, "I'm very concerned about AIDS, I

came to get as much information as I can."

A brief question and answer period followed the presentation.

The program was one of three

scheduled to deal with the issues surrounding AIDS, its prevention and future hopes. Two other programs will follow in February and March. For more information contact Student Affairs.



Photo by Elin Marcel

Toddler Torie Weinhold plays with a puzzle at Stepping Stone, Inc., Penn State Harrisburg's daycare center. The facility, which opened in August 1991, is located in the former Continuing Education Building, near Wisberg Hall.

Grads face lengthy and tedious job search

Ann Feeney-McGovern
Capital Times Staff

If you're planning to graduate this semester, you'd better start the job search now.

"It's taking longer (than in previous years) to find jobs--three to six months," said Career Services Coordinator Karl Martz. "I encourage people to start early."

One sign of the lingering recession is declining numbers of recruiters at job fairs, Martz said.

The Central Pennsylvania Employer Consortium, scheduled for Feb. 27 at the Farm Show, which last year hosted 130 employers, only expects 95 this year.

At the Cumberland Valley

Consortium, planned for Feb. 19 in Hagerstown, Md., 89 recruiters took part last year, but only 23 plan to attend this year, Martz said.

Martz also said that some employers have cancelled recruitment seminars previously scheduled for Penn State Harrisburg. He said he has also noticed significantly less demand for jobs in engineering and technical fields.

The reason, he said, is "world structure changes," such as reductions in nuclear arms and military budgets. Many engineers work for weapons manufacturers and consultant firms hired under government defense contracts.

In some cases the recession causes job cuts even when there's a need for labor.

This is especially true in education, Martz said. "The needs are there; what's missing is the budget."

Conversely, Martz said, he's noticed a slight increase in job opportunities for business majors. He said jobs remain available in accounting, information systems and computer science.

Graduates of the public affairs program have not been affected by a scarcity of employment opportunities, according to Robert Bresler, head of the division of public affairs.

"Most of our students (who have graduated) have jobs," he said. Employers are actually calling to ask if former students are available to fill openings, he said.

New behavioral science and education graduates have job opportunities, but the salaries tend to be lower and relocation is often necessary, said Betty Fortner, acting division head of behavioral science and education.

Many behavioral science positions are offering salaries well below the average for an individual with a degree, Fortner said.

As for education, Fortner said, "Pennsylvania is the teacher export state. Because there are so many teachers in the state, local employment may be scarce, but there is a need in other areas."

Peter Parisi, coordinator of the communications program in the

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