

Public Safety: *an in-depth look*

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People express concerns over safety

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Capital Times Reporters

In the aftermath of two reported assaults on university women, students, faculty, and staff questioned the way the administration released information, police protection and safety measures on campus.

"I'm disappointed in the way it was handled by those who released the information," said Andy Lauck, professor of Solar Engineering.

"It seemed like someone knew what had happened way before they said anything to anyone else," he said. "I think what they learned from that is that it's better to just be up front and let everyone know what's happening honestly and fairly."

"In the long run the most important thing is the personal safety of the people on campus and the college must take steps to see that people are secure."

**-Dr. William Mahar
Head of Humanities Division**

"The college has a responsibility to inform students of these kinds of things in a timely way," explained Dr. Mahar, head of the humanities division.

"I think the college has to be open and honest with any press inquiries that come," he said. "In the long run the most important thing is the personal safety of the people on campus and the college must take steps to see that people are secure."

Fearing for their position, several faculty members asked not to be identified.

"I'm flabbergasted about what has happened and bewildered why valid information wasn't made known about the rape that occurred back in September," said a professor within the public policy division, who asked not to be named.

"It was very strange that at first it was considered alleged and then they weren't sure it happened. It raised a whole bunch of questions and then I didn't hear any more about it until the news," the professor added.

Students attacked the use of the word "accost" in a news flyer that informed students of the reported Sept. 20th rape.

"There's a heck of a big difference between 'accosted' and rape!" said Jackie Sterner, a senior math science major.

People said they were also angry over campus police service.

"One thing that surprised me was that the rape happened in the upper parking lot overlooking the Capital Union Building, and that's right across from the police station!" explained a senior finance student, adding that he was surprised that the rape occurred close to the station without any police noticing.

Several instructors, who feared jeopardizing their position, asked not to be identified.

Lakshmana Viswanath, director of the computer lab, suggested that patrolling officers should be more visible, especially during late hours.

"There will be a lot of students working now until the end of the semester...we close at midnight, so after that they are trying to get back to their homes."

"I think it's not a secure place and that we should beef up security," he added.

Students of the Resident Student Council (RSC) started a petition about boosting security.

James Glackin, senior-secondary education, along with several other students of RSC, drew up a petition calling for increased security and patrols

bushes and doing the lights, and then at six news cameras (broadcast news stations) arrived," Kibler said, adding, "Everything is visible so when they run the cameras they can say 'here they put in lighting and here they chopped down the bushes.'"

The petition was designed to include a large number of commuters' signatures

since members of RSC felt their voices were not heard at the safety quorum on Oct. 26th.

Two additional safety quorums held that week, one at 5 p.m. and one at 1 p.m., were held at times inconvenient for most commuters, Kibler said.

Proposed bill would open crime reports

Trev Stair
Capital Times Reporter

Legislation that would force colleges to open their crime reports to the public is currently being discussed in the state House of Representatives.

Senate Bill 638, introduced by republican state Sen. Richard Tilghman, Montgomery County, would require campus police to open their logs containing the names of the persons arrested and the charges filed against them to the public.

"These campuses are, in many ways, small communities unto themselves. If students are unaware of criminal activities, they won't know what to do to limit their chances of becoming victims," Sen. Tilghman said.

The bill amends the College and University Security Information Act which required all Pennsylvania schools to supply crime statistics upon request.

Under the current legislation, campus crime reports from Penn State and other state-related schools are exempt from the state's public disclosure laws.

Since Penn State receives only partial funding from the state, it is considered a "state-related institution", according to David Morgan of the Pennsylvania Newspaper and Publisher's Association.

Public disclosure requests to campus police organizations such as the one at University Park, "routinely get denied," said Morgan.

Penn State's distinction as state-related is somewhat arbitrary, but has been upheld in court decisions, said Morgan.

Senate bill 638 would make the state-related distinction irrelevant, but the bill is meeting some resistance.

In the previous legislative session, the bill passed the Senate unanimously, but stalled in the state House of Representatives. Some members of the House Education committee felt that open reports would create a lifelong stigma for those implicated in them, according to Greg Jordan, an aide to Sen. Tilghman.

The bill was redrafted for this session and is currently sitting in the House. Jordan said that it is being pushed for by grass roots organizations such as Security on Campus.

Security on Campus is an eastern Pa. based organization founded in 1987 by Howard and Connie Cleary after their daughter was murdered and raped in her dorm room at Lehigh University.

Security on Campus has been instrumental in the national development and passage of legislation such as the Campus Crime and Security Information Law.

YWCA Crisis Services helps in healing rape victims

Chris Stine
Capital Times Staff

It began on a hot afternoon in August. Andrea, 20-years-old, had been hitch-hiking along the road near Maui, trying to reach the town of Lahaina. It was an acceptable practice to thumb a ride in Hawaii in 1976.

Two men and a woman in a pickup truck offered Andrea a ride. One of the men got in the back of the truck with her. After fifteen minutes, the man, who had just been released from prison, forced himself on her. Andrea suffered a brutal assault that included being bitten, struck, and finally, raped. Half an hour later, she managed to escape and called the police.

Andrea is fictitious name for the woman who now lives in the Harrisburg area. She is one of the countless number of women raped in the United States each year. Andrea overcame her physical and psychological damage through proper treatment after her ordeal. She agreed to speak about her tragedy in order to help Penn State students understand the horror of rape.

Andrea said she felt lucky to have escaped the man in the pickup truck. But her luck didn't hold out. Andrea was brutalized a second time.

Four years later, Andrea was raped by her sister's boyfriend. They had been drinking and she had become ill. The man attacked her despite her protests.

The memory is a bitter one for Andrea, who said it was worse than the first rape.

"Because he was someone I was supposed to trust and he forced himself on me," Andrea said.

Rape is, first and foremost, a crime of violence. Without proper counseling, the damage done could scar a victim for years. Blame is one of the biggest problems.

"It does vary depending on the individual," said Rita Shell, psychology professor at Penn State Harrisburg. "But it is common for a woman to feel very ashamed. Oftentimes she feels like she did something to provoke the attack."

This feeling was shared by Andrea and her parents when she called them after the first rape.

"They blamed me," said Andrea. "They thought it was my fault, but I thought it was my fault because I was hitch-hiking alone."

The rape by her sister's boyfriend also caused problems between her and her sister.

"I really thought that one was my fault because I was drinking and I gave him a place to stay," Andrea said. "My sister still has a big hang-up about it. It created a lot of problems."

Rape has nothing to do with sex. It is about power. Seldom is a victim singled out. More likely, the rapist is an individual with mental or emotional problems who feels the need to abuse someone to satisfy their need for control.

Along with blame, feelings of fear and shame can adversely affect a victim. Sometimes women feel ashamed to express any femininity in their

appearance for fear of becoming a target again. Those feelings erode a woman's self-worth and confidence.

"There are cases of women trying to cover up and forget," Shell said. "A friend of mine was a rape victim. She went to her door one morning and opened it. And an intruder forced his way into her home and raped her. Afterwards, she was joking about it. But it was clearly an attempt on her part to forget the horrible feelings she experienced."

To help heal the physical and emotional scars of rape victims, local rape crisis centers are readily available to assist anyone who needs help. Debbie Bauer, the rape crisis manager at the Harrisburg YWCA, offers this information:

"We offer a 24-hour hotline, as well as short term counseling. And all our services are confidential. We also offer escort services to the hospital."

Andrea's trauma occurred over 13 years ago. Today, she is married and a mother.

"If a woman is raped, she should talk about it with someone she trusts," Andrea said. "Talk to a rape crisis center, and don't blame herself for any reason, because she's a victim. It's not because she's wearing sexy clothes."

Harrisburg Rape Crisis Services can be reached at 717-238-7273 or 800-654-1211.



Artwork by Chris Stine