

Counseling offered for rape victims anytime

Group stays with survivor during recovery process

By Alice Thornton
Emerald Reporter

Students who are victims of rape or incest may seek help 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling the Rape Crisis Network at 485-6700.

RCN is a service offered to anyone in Lane County. It is the state's only independent group that offers counseling and information to victims of rape or incest, said Nancy McDowell, director of RCN.

RCN is trying to reduce the trauma of rape by offering peer counseling and a variety of other services to help survivors or their friends and families.

Services are available free of charge, although McDowell said donations are accepted. RCN receives 50 percent of its funding through donations.

"Our services are available whether you're a man, woman or child," McDowell said. "We offer one-to-one peer counseling to rape survivors, their family, friends or anyone that has been touched by the assault."

McDowell said 80 percent of the people that receive help at RCN are women, 15 percent are children and 5 percent are men.

According to a publication offered by RCN, rape is the fastest-growing and most underreported violent crime in the country.

RCN's statistics report that more than one-third of all women in the country will be sexually assaulted or abused in their lifetimes, but only about one in ten rapes of adults is reported.

RCN's 24-hour answering service takes anywhere from 300 to 600 calls every month from people who are seeking counseling, McDowell said.

In addition to counseling, RCN offers a variety of support services and educational programs for the public.

Support groups for victims of rape and incest are offered several times a year.

"We also offer support through legal and medical advocacy," McDowell said. "We go through the process of recovery with the survivor as long as the survivor wants us there."

Members of RCN also observe trials that involve rape or incest through a program called Courtwatch.

"Courtwatch shows there's a public interest and a concern," McDowell said. "It shows there's active involvement toward preventing rape."

Safe Touch is a program offered to elementary school students in kindergarten through fifth grade. It teaches children what kind of touching is acceptable and unacceptable.

RCN also offers public education by giving more than 200 presentations every year to schools and community groups. It is also utilized by Lane county as an information and referral service and has published a self-defense booklet for women.

RCN is a member of the Unwanted Sexual Attention Task Force and has worked with Men Against Rape and CARE. Creating a Rape Free Environment.

Currently, RCN operates with two paid staff members and 40 trained volunteers. In the past,

it has operated with 30 to 80 volunteers.

Volunteers initially receive 40 hours of training that teaches them the issues involved with sexual assault. Additional training is offered for volunteers who wish to participate in public speaking or work on the phone lines.

RCN has been in operation for 12 years. It began as a gen-

eral phone counseling service that was operated out of a kitchen by two women and one man, McDowell said.

"After awhile they realized they needed to specialize in the problems of sexual assault," McDowell said.

RCN continued to expand and outgrew several offices before settling at its current location on 1628 E. 19th Avenue.

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Correction

The Et al column that ran in Wednesday's Emerald was the same column printed the day before. The Emerald regrets the error, and apologizes for any confusion it may have caused.

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Page 3