

BILL

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said Laura Lorenzen of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.

"We're seeing an epidemic in crimes against women," Lorenzen said. "It's pretty horrendous, and not a lot is being done to stop it."

Every week, 21,000 women report to police they have been beaten in their own homes, Biden said in a Jan. 21 speech. Every day, more than 2,500 women visit an emergency room because of violence. Every hour, as many as 70 women will be attacked by rapists.

The Violence Against Women Act represents an attempt to fight the crime epidemic, Biden said in his speech.

"We have waited too long already to recognize the horror and the sweep of this type of violence," he said. "For too many years, our idea of crime has left no room for violence against women."

Caitlin Twain, ASUO safety affairs coordinator, said about 50 students, including the rape victims in this article, are working on a letter-writing campaign to encourage students to support the bill.

Students can stop by a table in the EMU Lobby outside the Fishbowl any day except weekends and Wednesdays to write letters to legislators. The table will be out until March 5.

About 100 people have written letters at the table and Twain said she hopes to collect 700 letters. She and three campaign volunteers will hand-deliver the letters to senators and representatives in Washington, D.C., during spring break.

The letter-writing campaign will enable Twain and other students who oversee the tables to educate students about rape.

"I'm convinced everyone knows somebody who has been raped," Twain said. "This is not a woman's campaign or a survivor's campaign. This is everybody's campaign."

Rape victims on campus say they believe the bill will ensure that victims are not blamed for their attacks. The bill would prohibit the use of a victim's clothing in federal court to show that a victim incited or invited sexual assault.

If the court system is changed so that judges and lawyers no longer blame rape victims, then perhaps everyone will stop blaming the victims.

At 15, Lynn visited her mom in Colorado with two high school friends. The trio met two men whom they took to the house of Lynn's mom. Lynn's mom wasn't home.

The men had brought along alcohol and Lynn got drunk. She and one of the men kissed on her mom's bed until she passed out. When she woke up, he was raping her.

When Lynn told her best friend about the rape, her friend reacted with anger — toward her.

"I told my best friend, and she said, 'You're such a whore,'" she said. "She said she didn't know if she could be friends with me. That was the hardest part — that my best friend couldn't support me."

Diane pressed charges against the rapist and is awaiting a trial. She said the man not only violated her sexually but also destroyed the person she had been.

"Not a judge or a jury can give me that back," she said.

RAPE

Continued from Page 1

But Michael said he calls what happened with Elizabeth rape.

"I went through all of the rationalizations," he said. "We'd had sex before. I didn't hit her or rip her clothes."

Michael felt guilty and worried about other people finding out. He also feared there was something in him that would cause him to rape again.

"It's not like when I'm going out with a girl, I think, 'What can I do not to rape her,'" he said. "I have to be on top of these things all the time."

Michael, now 23, said he feels sexually aggressive toward women who wear biker shorts and short skirts. He said he wishes women did not feel they must dress in what he considers provocative clothing. He also wishes he didn't feel so angry toward women.

"Angry is not pleasant," he said. "I get angry because I feel like they're taunting me, and I'm trying to work on this."

Michael has trouble touching people, especially women. He said he fears people will pull away, look at him with disgust and say, "Uhhh, yuck. Stop," he said.

"A pat on the back, anything," he said. "It's like slow motion. It's painful."

Michael was born the son of an alcoholic father and a worka-

holic, co-dependent mother who never kissed or hugged him.

When Michael was seven or eight years old, a male babysitter sexually molested him. The abuse lasted almost two years. Michael was too frightened to tell his parents.

Michael's mind blocked the knowledge of the abuse. But when he turned 13 years old, he had growing fears of becoming sexual. He cried uncontrollably and his hands shook constantly, he said. He turned to alcohol and drugs, beginning with marijuana and ending with cocaine when he was 17.

At 18, Michael kicked his addictions. He saw a psychologist and began remembering his sexual abuse.

"The images were too painful,"

he said. "I would flinch. I would block it out with music, food, alcohol. They weren't quite as effective as illicit drugs."

Michael recently told his parents about his child abuse. His father didn't say anything. His mother treated it as a piece of trivia. "Did you know the kid across the street was molested, too?" she asked.

Michael said he feels violent when he looks at women, but believes he's got a handle on his problem. He doesn't believe he will rape again and doesn't like to call himself a rapist.

"It's hard for me to consider myself a rapist when there's a guy out there with a gun kidnapping women and raping them," he said.

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