

Mother continues fight against AIDS, hatred

Rebecca Merritt
Oregon Daily Emerald

Ryan White was forced to move from his hometown in Indiana because kids at school called him a "fag." His family continuously received hate mail and a bullet was shot through a window in their house.

White, who died at age 18 in 1990, was a hemophiliac who contacted the AIDS virus through a blood transfusion. But residents of Kokomo, Ind. treated him with the same phobia and hatred faced by gay men who are infected with the disease.

"Because of this disease called AIDS, our lives turned around overnight. People thought because he had AIDS he was bad," said Ryan's mother, Jeanne White. "Ryan knew how the gay community was treated because he was treated the same way."

Jeanne White was in Eugene Friday to explain her son's battle with AIDS at a University seminar. Since her son's death, she has dedicated her life to educating young people.

"If you have sex, you're at risk for this disease and that's about all of us," White said. "Why can't everyone see that this is everybody's problem?"

Ryan White was diagnosed with the AIDS virus when he was 13. Doctors gave him three to six months to live.

White, a single mother who worked for a GM factory, said doctors told her that Ryan could not infect others through everyday contact. She assumed people in her hometown would be understanding.

However, after the town learned about the illness, Jeanne White had to fight the school district in court just so her son could attend school. The Whites won in court but were still ostracized by the community. Ryan came to school for the first time to find his locker spray painted with obscenities.

Ryan White's battle against AIDS put him in the national spotlight. He became close friends with Elton John and co-hosted an AIDS benefit with Elizabeth Taylor. Royalties from a made-for-television movie about his life and a \$16,500 loan from Elton John enabled the White family to move to a community that was more accepting of Ryan and his disease.

Jeanne White said her son's illness taught her to be more accepting of others and brought her closer to the gay community.

"When Ryan was first diagnosed, a lot of people in the gay community stepped out to help," she said. "Once you have AIDS you're just like everyone else who has AIDS. You want to stay alive."

Speakers highlight of workshop

Pete Schneider
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

The fight against AIDS got a little closer to home for some students this weekend when they participated in a workshop called "Risky Business: AIDS — On the Trail of a Killer."

The conference, organized by the University's Substance Abuse Prevention Program (SAPP) last week at the Lane County Fairgrounds, was attended by more than 300 University students. Ten nationally and internationally known AIDS activists took the podium during the seminar, speaking out on a variety of AIDS-related topics.

"This is an AIDS information program that is unlike any other that has been in this town," said Miki Mace, program coordinator. "Because of the caliber of the speakers, plus the message they have, it's not just your basic AIDS 101 that you would get in college. It's the newest and best from the people who know the most about the fight against AIDS."

"The best is learning more in-depth information about people with the disease," said Susie Dunne, a University business major who attended the seminar. "I learned a lot more about AIDS than I could have from a class or a newspaper."

Mace attributes much of the success of the program to the fact that many of the speakers were HIV positive who spoke from both a personal and professional level.

The conference began last Thursday with a sneak preview of "Secrets," a Kaiser Permanente educational theatrical production geared toward youth HIV prevention. The performance focused on the facts of the HIV virus, its transmission and attempted to dispel many of the myths and superstitions surrounding AIDS infections.

The weekend seminar started with the presentation of Jeanne

White's for-TV movie about her son Ryan's bout with the HIV virus that he acquired through a blood transfusion. In White's speech, she told the painful story of how people in her community refused to let her son attend school and forced her family out of town.

Among the other presenters was Cleve Jones, president of the NAMES project in Washington, D.C. Jones started the National AIDS Quilt program. The names of thousands of AIDS victims are stitched on the quilt. In his presentation on Saturday, Jones described how the massive quilt is viewed in Washington D.C. by more than two million visitors each year.

The conference was one of the many SAPP organizes each year. SAPP's overall goal is to provide life skills to students and cover the issues on campus that would not normally be covered in a classroom setting. In doing so, SAPP features prominent professionals and activists who are working in the fields that SAPP covers.

"Our program is about real life stuff, not just theory," said Mace, who regards SAPP as one of the University's best kept secrets. "What we do is bring in people who are working in the field so the students get more of a hands-on approach, more of a human-gut approach."

Students participating in the program received upper division credit. The cost was \$40 per credit hour, which included all fees, books and materials, plus a meal on Friday.

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— MIKI MACE
University Substance Abuse
Prevention Program coordinator

White on Friday morning. White, an internationally regarded AIDS activist, is the founder and president of the Ryan White Foundation in Indianapolis, IN. Many remember the 1990 made-

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■ POLICE BEAT

The following incidents were reported to the University Office of Public Safety and the Eugene police department Jan. 11-17.

• Burglary was reported Jan. 11 from a University greenhouse on the 1300 block of Franklin. According to police reports, two men posing as greenhouse employees entered a building and removed a 400-watt sodium bulb valued at \$80.

• A 21-year-old man was cited for possession of less than one ounce of marijuana and criminal trespass Jan. 11 on the 500 block of East 13th Avenue. According to police reports, a police officer observed a drug transaction in progress and contacted the suspect.

• A 37-year-old man was cited for drinking in public at the intersection of Franklin Boulevard and Villard Street on Jan. 11.

• An 18-year-old student reported vandalism Jan. 11 on the 1900 block of Alder Street. Two tires on his vehicle were slashed.

• A 18-year-old student reported a theft Jan. 12 in Pacific Hall. According to police reports, unknown subjects tampered with his personal computer and removed some memory chips.

• A 25-year-old man was

arrested on two outstanding theft warrants Jan. 13 on the 1400 block of Alder Street.

• A 43-year-old man was cited for three counts of theft on Jan. 14 on the 700 block of East 13th Avenue. According to police reports, the suspect was stealing books from one location and returning them for cash at another.

• A 22-year-old male Lane Community College student was arrested Jan. 16 for felony drug sales on the 1300 block of Patterson Street. According to police reports, a police officer observed the suspect hand another male a small package. The officer recognized the suspect from an earlier drug arrest. The officer approached the suspect and received permission to search him, finding \$90 in cash and several small baggies of marijuana. The suspect later admitted selling marijuana.

• A 31-year-old man was cited for theft in the second degree Jan. 17 on the 1300 block of Columbia Street. According to police reports, an OPS officer witnessed the suspect cutting a bicycle lock with bolt cutters.

—Compiled by Joe Harwood

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