

Alumni gives SAFE support

Jade Rubick, a University graduate, formed Stop Abuse for Everyone to give men support services, too

By Lisa Catto
News Reporter

Heterosexual men, gay men and lesbians victimized by domestic violence may feel they have been left behind by support organizations in the past, but more groups such as Stop Abuse for Everyone are aiming to increase services for them.

University graduate Jade Rubick created SAFE almost a decade ago to help people in his situation find help for dealing with domestic violence.

Rubick said he had been in an abusive relationship for a couple years, but when he looked for help he found that most of the organizations would only help women.

"There didn't seem to be real help for men in abusive situations," he said.

Rubick said his goal was to create a support group and help hotline in Eugene, but he began with a Web site, which received a huge response.

According to a Department of Justice report of the National Violence Against Women Survey, 834,732 men are battered each year.

"The idea is we don't want to discriminate based on characteristics that aren't important," he said.

Over time, his project developed to include person-to-person services, and in January 2001 Rubick officially established the group as a nonprofit organization.

With the motto "our name is our mission," SAFE provides a speaker's bureau, court advocacy, support

groups, hotlines and community resources to every type of person who has been victimized by violence.

SAFE has opened a chapter in New Hampshire, which has the same services as a domestic violence shelter without the actual shelter. This chapter received more than 150 calls regarding domestic violence in the first three months of 2004.

Rubick is currently working to open a shelter in Eugene and Portland. He said the organization is based in Portland, but they do policy work nationally and he hopes a new Portland chapter would help people on a local level.

One of SAFE's most popular services is a brochure that individually discusses domestic violence against heterosexual men, gay men and lesbians. These brochures have been translated into many languages, including Chinese, Russian, Bulgarian and Spanish, to better serve the communities. Abigail Van Buren endorsed the heterosexual men brochure in her Dear Abby column. Rubick said he hopes SAFE will be able to conduct a nationwide survey of available domestic violence services in the future.

"We're trying to get feedback on what type of services are out there," he said.

He said SAFE has received praise from the Points of Light Foundation and the

National Crime Prevention Council.

Eugene Womenspace Community Outreach Director Margo Schaefer said programs such as SAFE are important to make people feel comfortable.

"Our program is called Womenspace, so that could be a barrier for some people," she said. "People should go where they feel comfortable."

Although Womenspace used to just serve women, Schaefer said they have opened their services to everyone.

She said she is glad to see these type of programs available, especially due to the dramatic rise of domestic violence recently.

Schaefer said since September 2003, Lane County has experienced nine homicides or suicides where either the abuser or victim died. Prior to September, there were nine similar incidents over a seven-year span.

Rubick said SAFE's goal is to provide services to everyone who needs them.

"It doesn't matter what type of person you are," he said. "If you're in an abusive relationship, it is the type of experience you're having that is important. The services you receive should be based on what you need, rather than who you are."

Contact the crime/health/safety reporter at lisacatto@dailyemerald.com.

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Program's founder tries to help victims

A professor seeks funds to continue ACCESS for domestic violence victims

By Ayisha Yahya
News Editor

A University faculty member is trying to help victims of domestic violence reshape their lives. Counseling Psychology Assistant Professor Krista Chronister said she wants to restart a program this fall that helps battered women with economic and career-development assistance.

Chronister first started the Advancing Career Counseling and Educational Support for Survivors of domestic violence program in fall 2000.

"The first time was for my doctoral research," she said.

Chronister said the ACCESS program — which focused on helping victims of abuse find out how they can get jobs and further their careers — was the first of its kind in the area.

She added that it is important to understand how domestic violence affects battered women's abilities to work or find jobs.

"We help them identify different jobs," she said, adding that the women also learn about goal setting, job searching, and how to do informational interviews.

"We talk a lot about the impact of domestic violence on their career," she said.

She said focusing on employment and career development in the short and long terms will help abused women access financial resources and allow them to become economically stable.

Chronister worked in collaboration with local churches and Womenspace, which provides services for victims of domestic violence. According to a University news release, Chronister wanted to start ACCESS after she had volunteered at Womenspace for four years and realized that the community lacked development programs that addressed women's economic and career needs.

"If we can help women in these areas we can be more effective in getting them out of abusive relationships and prevent reoccurrence of domestic violence," she said in the release.

While the initial program was a

five-week career-counseling group, Chronister said she now hopes to initiate a year-long program that will serve up to 100 women in the area.

Chronister said 67 women started and finished the pilot program. More than 150 initially participated, and more than 300 called to inquire about the program, she said.

Chronister said she is currently seeking funding to restart the program, which would cost about \$50,000 to \$70,000 for a full year.

She said she hopes social service agencies will eventually implement programs like ACCESS as part of their routine services.

Womenspace Community Outreach Director Margo Schaefer said programs like ACCESS are vital in offering a support network for victims and putting them in contact with people who may have experienced the same problems.

"It's really important that people understand what happened to them," she said.

Womenspace has various programs, including a 24-hour crisis hotline, an emergency shelter and a drop-in advocacy center. Schaefer said Womenspace works with about 55 families each year. A recent study shows that one in 10 women in Oregon has been a victim of partner abuse, Schaefer said, and domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of violent death for women.

"When a woman is murdered in this country, one in three times it's her husband or boyfriend who killed her," she said.

In Lane County, 11 domestic violence-related deaths have occurred since September, more than twice those reported in Multnomah County, Schaefer said.

Women are not the only victims, however. Schaefer said men also experience abuse, and Womenspace does serve male clients as well.

Schaefer said it is necessary for people to know how they can help those who may be victims.

"One of the most important things for somebody to make a successful change is to have a support person," she said.

Contact the news editor at ayishayahya@dailyemerald.com.

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