

on't let him rape again'

CCC advocates urge women to report rape



Christy Kofsky
...24-hour duty

Rape is a crime that violates the most personal thing a woman has -- her body. In many cases it goes unreported because of the victim's feelings of humiliation and helplessness.

Clackamas County's Rape Victim Advocate program is seeking to help women overcome these feelings and give them someone to help them through the trying period of medical examination, police questioning and trial.

Christy Kofsky, a secretary in Clackamas Community College's science department is one of these Rape Victim Advocates (RVA's). After an extensive training period in the legal, medical and psychological problems of rape and screening by mental health authorities she is on call 24 hours a day for one day each month.

By Happie Thacker
Staff Writer

During this time she will respond to calls by C-Com, a county agency who refers calls to the RVA after a rape has been reported to the police.

The majority of the time the RVA goes directly to the hospital. They attempt to provide emotional support and to explain the medical tests the victim will undergo.

"They've been through a trying time emotionally and need a lot of support," she said. "A lot of the time family members don't want to have anything to do with a rape victim at a time like this."

The RVA sits with the victim during the various tests she must undergo. A Pap smear, venereal disease test and a secrete test (to check for the male's blood type which is sometimes excreted) can be trying for a woman during the most routine examinations and they take on a whole new and frightening aspect after a rape.

"She's just been through a bad situation with a male," said Kofsky, "and is going into a male dominated situation with male police officers and doctors."

Clackamas Community College

"Woman doctors and nurses are often harder on rape victims than males," she feels, "they have the attitude that she is somehow responsible -- that she asked for it."

Mary Oldford, CCC counselor and a former RVA disagrees with this statement. "That is a sexist remark, there are bad women doctors as well as male doctors but the stereotype of the victim 'asking for it' is all too real. There is often the feeling that 'She should have buttoned another button on her blouse.'"

Kofsky has only responded to one call as an RVA -- a case of child molestation. This was a unique case as it was the first and only case of child molestation that the program has handled.

"The police chief wanted someone along since they were young girls," said Kofsky, "Eight, 9 and 10, and he felt that an RVA could be of help during the questioning."

Rape is a crime that can be committed against any woman regardless of age. Multnomah County has reports of rape victims ranging from 18 months to 84-years old. In the case of the infant the male babysitter

"When the program first began we had several calls right away," said Kofsky, "but now it's slacked off. I don't know whether it's because incidents are not occurring so often, if women are just not reporting the incidents that do occur, or if they don't know we exist."

Oldford blames the lack of reported cases on the rural mentality of most of Clackamas County.

"It is not a place with a large population of women asserting their right not to be raped," she said. "Clackamas County and CCC do not have a large number of feminist assertive women or feminist assertive men."

Both women feel that it is important that rapes be reported so that the rapist is not allowed to go free and rape again.

"Men who rape women, hate women," said Oldford. "They do it out of violence, disrespect and are using the penis as a sword -- a weapon. It's a cruel perversion that demeans the value of her body. It is an invasion of a woman's darkest, most private place where one should have a choice of what happens."

According to Oldford the worst part about rape is the fear of having no control over the situation.

"The feeling of powerlessness, that one literally can be raped and have no recourse is terrifying," she said. "This is the main purpose of the program -- it offers a group of people who are on the side of the victim."

In cases where it is necessary for the victim to testify at a court hearing the RVA is able to go along and provide additional support.

"There is a lot of pressure with the difficulty of the trial, of getting up and saying, 'I have been raped,'" said Oldford. "It is often

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of one infant, worked on the baby's vagina for weeks to get it big enough to permit entry.

"I am no longer in the program because of cases like these," said Oldford, "some of it is just too painful for me to deal with."

Clackamas County does not have a large number of reported rape cases.

a case of you against him and his word against yours.

"The negative energies surrounding the report of a rape case are tremendous. Often it is a boyfriend, family friend or even a father. Even a husband may be the assailant even though a woman has no legal recourse against him.

"I would like to encourage women to not be afraid to report rape and to use the program, which functions as a buffer against the negative energies that result from reporting a rape," said Oldford.

"It is very important to get out the feeling of hate and anger and to realize that there are men who do not rape, who are kind and gentle and considerate. A woman should not lose out on relationships with half the human race because of one weep.

"Women on campus who choose not to pursue rape as a legal problem should contact me or one of the other counselors who can help on a personal level to resolve the trauma," continued Oldford.

"They should not try to forget it and hope it goes away. Rape can tie into other unresolved problems with father or open other psychological data that has been plugged up inside."

"I think the program really helps," said Kofsky, "at least some of our responses from women we've helped seem to indicate this. The victims are really appreciative of what we've done and sometimes call afterward for help with other problems that may come up that are related to the incident. They come to look upon the RVA who has helped them as a friend."



Mary Oldford
...former rape victim advocate