

GROUP SUPPORTS MALE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network) one in six men have been through abusive sexual experiences before reaching adulthood. Males experience the same feelings and reactions as other survivors of sexual assault, RAINN says, but they may also be up against additional challenges “because of social attitudes and stereotypes about men and masculinity.”

Rebecca Robinson, support group coordinator for Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) here in Lane County, says while there is a great need for a men’s survivors group, in the past SASS has struggled to get one going. However, a new partnership with National Alliance on Mental Illness-Lane County (NAMI) is giving male-identified survivors of sexual assault a place to go.

SASS is very female-empowering, says Jose Soto-Gates, executive director of NAMI-Lane County, and he says men looking for support around sexual assault issues may not feel comfortable in a space with so much female power, and may also worry about triggering women who have been assaulted.

“Most often women are assaulted by men,” Robinson adds. “So to be a man in that environment is to feel like they might be looked on like a bad guy.”

Until now, SASS has been unable to get attendees to come to a men’s survivors group at its offices. However, NAMI-Lane County, which Soto says is all-volunteer run and takes no money from pharmaceutical companies, recently moved into a space across from Autzen Stadium with a bigger resource center. Soto-Gates says NAMI is starting to get the word out about the meeting space available at its new location, and SASS is now hosting its male survivors group at NAMI.

Robinson says the drop-in group for self-identified males over the age of 18 is confidential and empowering and is starting to have participants for the first time.

She says that one thing many people don’t realize is that in addition to supporting recent survivors, SASS “also supports survivors who experienced sexual assault a long time ago.”

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— REBECCA ROBINSON, SASS

Soto-Gates says as more people focus on mental health and become more comfortable having a conversation about it, NAMI is becoming more well-known in the community. He says that SASS fits in well with the NAMI’s “golden rule — we maintain a culture of respect.”

Robinson is also working on hosting a teen workshop dealing with oppression, consent and relationships. The first two hours would be

educational and the last hour would be personalized support. That group requires pre-registration and would meet on Friday afternoons at NAMI through July 26, if it gets enough participants.

The support groups are free. The men’s drop-in group meets from 5:30 to 7:30 pm Fridays at NAMI, 2411 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Someone will be there to open doors starting at 5:20 pm, Robinson says.

SASS also hosts a women’s drop-in sexual assault support group from 7 to 8:30 pm Mondays at SASS, 591 W. 19th Ave. in Eugene.

For more information on SASS go to sass-lane.org, email supportgroup@sass-lane.org, call the business line at 484-9791 or the 24-hour crisis line at 343-7277. To contact NAMI-Lane County, call 343-7688. — *Camilla Mortensen*

EMPATHY TENT A HIT AT SATURDAY MARKET

On June 20, about 16 people visited the new “empathy tent” at Saturday Market for a simple reason: to be heard. In honor of the late Marshall Rosenberg, founder of Nonviolent Communication, Eugene resident Mark Roberts set up the tent so that people could be heard in a nonjudgmental way and experience relief from their troubles.

“I had the idea for years,” Roberts says, though he says the specific idea for an empathy tent was from another person who attended a memorial for Rosenberg.

The ages of the tent’s visitors ranged from as young as 12 to people in their 60s. Some of the sessions were very brief, while others lasted as long as 40 minutes. People came to the tent for a variety of reasons, Roberts says. Some wanted to talk about their family troubles or the community, and some just wanted to vent about the state of the country.

Roberts is president of Lane Independent Living Alliance, an organization that assists those with disabilities living in Lane County. He defines empathy as “the quality of being with another person” and notes that it is possible to be empathic with one’s self.

Being with another person is exactly what Roberts and his small team of listeners accomplished at Saturday Market. “I was a little nervous, but the first person was brought in quickly,” Roberts says, adding that he wasn’t sure what to expect but that Saturday’s turnout was “beyond my expectations.”

The February death of Marshall Rosenberg left a void in the local community, Roberts says. Although not an Oregonian, Rosenberg’s influence was felt strongly in Eugene, and he traveled here often. At a local memorial for him, the mourners broke into small groups, started telling Rosenberg stories and tried to figure out a way to help keep the spirit of Rosenberg’s work alive. From this the idea evolved the empathy tent at Saturday Market.

Empathy between individuals is a two-way street, Roberts says. “All of our listeners have to be grounded and ready to listen. You can’t fake a quality of presence,” he adds. You can’t be empathic effectively “if you’re riled up about the state of affairs.”

The space for the empathy tent was allocated free of charge by Saturday Market due to sponsorship by the nonprofit Oregon Network for Compassionate Communication. The tent was initially a one-time event, but the it was so successful that Roberts has secured financial backing to cover whatever fees are necessary to keep the tent going on a weekly or monthly basis. Roberts says he feels the tent constitutes a community service and will do “whatever it takes to keep it open.”

Learn more about Marshall Rosenberg and Nonviolent Communication at wkly.ws/21f. — *Mike Bivins*

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

GRETCHEN DUBIE

“My mother was a special educator,” says Gretchen Dubie, a Catholic school student through college in Burlington, Vermont. “I was fascinated by her students’ honesty and humor.” In 1994, one day after graduating from all-girls Trinity College with degrees in special education and psychology, Dubie and two friends hit the road for Alaska and summer work in a cannery. Returning in September with a new boyfriend, Chris Gadsby, she stopped in Eugene to visit an old friend. “The car was ransacked while we slept,” she says, and in the time it took to replace car documents, they had decided to stay. “Six months later I was pregnant.” The couple had two kids, Anaiese and Brautigan, a marriage in 1998 and a divorce in 2002. She put in 13 years of work for Relief Nursery, a local agency that supports younger at-risk kids and their families. “I wore many hats there,” says Dubie, who teamed with Dr. Lori Britain to open nine regional Relief Nurseries in Oregon and five in Ukraine, by way of a USAID grant. “I was an expert witness for the state in parental termination cases. It was difficult for me as a new mom.” But it prepared her for selection, in 2009, as executive director of the Oregon Supported Living Program, a unionized nonprofit with 190 employees that supports adults with developmental disabilities. “My pride and joy is the OSLP Arts and Culture Program,” she says. “We started it in 2012, to provide recreational opportunities for the folks we serve. It has become a source of happiness for so many people.” Visit the program’s Lincoln Gallery at 309 W. 4th Ave. in Eugene, open weekdays from 10 am to 5 pm.

Know anyone whose good work deserves attention in this space? Call the editor at 484-0519 or email editor@eugeneweekly.com.

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY SCHEDULE

- ODOT is currently spraying **roadsides**. Call Tony Kilmer at ODOT District 5 at 744-8080 or call (888) 996-8080 for sometimes inaccurate herbicide application information. Highways recently sprayed include I-5, 126 near Santiam Pass and Territorial near Lorane. Though all of Highway 36 was sprayed in May, not all of this spray was reported on the ODOT information line.

- BLM will **not be spraying** more than 5,000 acres of brush near fire trails in three counties including Lane County. Instead, it will be doing manual brush removal of invasive weeds. See ODF notification 2015-772-09247, call Tim Meehan at 726-3588 with questions.

- Joanna Lovera, 206-8827, plans to hire Oregon Forest Management Services, 520-5941, to spray 46.6 acres near **Murdoch Road** with Transline. See ODF notification 2015-781-09139, call Brian Peterson at 935-2283 with questions.

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