

# Victims create messages

**Women's Resource Center is sponsoring Sexual Assault Awareness**

BY SHANNON WALTER  
Staff Reporter

T-shirts covered with stories of hate and sorrow waved in the wind on campus this week, hoping to open the eyes of Truman students.

The Women's Resource Center sponsored Sexual Assault Awareness Week this week to bring an important issue to light. The Clothesline Project showcased shirts made by sexual assault victims or their friends and family. Other programs throughout the week included a panel discussion concerning recent changes to the Student Conduct Code and a stalking awareness meeting.

At 8 p.m. the WRC is hosting their last event on the Mall called Take Back the Night, a candle-light vigil for survivors and victims lost.

Senior and WRC Staff Coordinator Katibeth Lee said this week is very important for people of all ages, genders and sexual orientations.

"While statistically the majority of people sexually assaulted are women, men and women are both sexually assaulted, and anyone can prevent it," Lee said.

Lee said sexual assault is an important issue to address because, although it is an uncomfortable topic, it has affected too many people to be ignored.

"It's really hard to talk about and it's really uncomfortable because it's a very sensitive issue for a lot of individuals," Lee said. "Even if you haven't been sexually assaulted, you more than likely know someone who has, so I think it's really important and I'm glad that it's in the forefront of everyone's minds because when we forget about it, we can't do anything about it."

She said she was most excited about the panel discussion concerning changes to the Student Conduct Code on Tuesday.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about what happens when students step forward to report a sexual assault," Lee said. "Dean [of Student Affairs Lou Ann] Gilchrist told me that in the 25 years she has



T-shirts hang in the wind under a tent by the Student Union Building. Shirts are made by sexual assault victims or friends and family. The Women's Resource Center is the sponsor for the week-long event.

Shannon Walter/Index

worked at Truman, no victims that have stepped forward have been charged with anything having to do with alcohol or drug use."

There are often many misconceptions about the women who work at the WRC, Lee said.

"I think there are a lot of negative stereotypes about being a feminist, and it's not about hating men or being a bra-burner or a femi-nazi," Lee said. "It's really about recognizing the systems of oppression and saying, 'Hey, no matter what your gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class is, it's about equality for all people.'"

Both men and women work at the WRC. Lee said they have one of the most diverse staffs right now, contradicting the stereotypes thrown at them.

Senior Chris Reid is one of the men who works at the WRC. As he looked at the T-shirts covered with sad stories, he said he knew why he chose to work at the WRC. He was inspired to start working

there this semester because of the programs and events they sponsor throughout the year and to support his mother, Reid said.

"I came to the conclusion that this is something I'd like to help move along the ideas of while I'm still here," Reid said. "My mom has had rough times in her life, and she could have benefited [from] some of the education that the WRC provides. It can help make the lives of women a lot easier if they [attend some of our events] rather than learning it from unfortunate life experiences."

He said programs such as Sexual Assault Awareness Week benefit not only women, but men on campus as well.

"I think it's important for everyone to know what rape really is," he said. "It's seen on TV a lot with violence and force, but that's not always the case."

"The majority of rapes are done by people who know each other. It's not always a stranger. So, it's important for everyone to realize that."

Reid said his friends support him as a male working at the WRC.

Sophomore Jennifer Blank also started working at the WRC this semester. Her decision to work there came from a passion for the events they put on.

"It's definitely a student awareness week to open eyes that rapes are occurring on campus," Blank said. "A lot of people refuse to acknowledge that it happens, even in a small town like Kirksville."

Blank said this week has come at a very relevant time for Kirksville because of the three reported off-campus rapes, which were reported on in the Sept. 17 edition of the Index, and the upcoming closure of Planned Parenthood.

"I want to encourage people to attend our events to learn about the issues we're discussing," she said. "People are wary of the Women's Resource Center, but we're not all feminists who don't shave their legs and hate men."

## Mexico

Speaker Barbara Martinez Jitner will speak about sexual abuse in Mexico

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without tariffs," Tucker said.

"And they have lower standards of living in Mexico, lower wages and very low regulations for workers, so there are currently 300 factories in this city ... and most of the workers are female because they don't get paid as much, so it's cheap labor."

Tucker said it's unsettling that NAFTA has founded these places of work yet doesn't seem to be concerned about what happens to the people working in them.

"It is disturbing that this [is] happening in the factories created by NAFTA, and it's kind of re-enforcing the impression that these human beings are being considered expendable," Mclane-Iles said. "And they're not. We don't want to be involved in any kind of economic agreement that encourages this corruption and violence towards any group."

Jaime Diaz, a representative for the Hispanic American Leadership Organization on campus, said the violence against women affected some of the group's members personally.

"The majority of our members are from or have family members from Mexico," Diaz said. "And one of them, actually, our treasurer, has family from the Juarez area, which is what the presentation deals with, so that really hit close to home."

Betty Mclane-Iles said students also can take action to help prevent what Martinez Jitner calls "femicide" from continuing in the Juarez area by appealing to local government officials and bringing it to the forefront of people's minds.

"Learn about it," Mclane-Iles said. "That's the most important. Be open to not to be afraid about questioning what has been put down to the status quo. Understand that our interest in diversity extends to other cultures, other nationalities."

"And to write to our government, representatives of our government, to encourage them to put pressure diplomatically on the Mexican government and to provide protection for these workers ... to create some kind of protection and assure that these people won't be abused or hurt anymore."

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