



Thursday, April 10, 2003

Survivors speak out at 'Take Back the Night'

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

More than 100 Oakland University students, faculty, staff and community members joined in the effort to speak out against sexual assault at Take Back the Night 2003. The nationally recognized event is organized locally to provide a supportive environment for victims of sexual abuse and raise awareness of this issue.

OU teamed with **Help Against Violent Encounters Now** (HAVEN), a Pontiac-based center for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, to hold the event on campus for the second consecutive year.

Of those who participated, many were close to persons who were sexual assault victims.

"A lot of people I love have been through domestic abuse or assault," said senior English major Erin Liebner. "I regularly attend awareness-raising events like this and feel it's important to support them. It's also important for girls to break their silence, and this event caters to that."

Participants gathered at the "Saints and Sinners" fountain in front of Kresge Library to hear welcome remarks from Judge Lisa Asadorian of the 52nd District Court in Rochester Hills, OU Police Chief Sam Lucido, and Haven President and CEO Hedy Nuriel.

"It's very appropriate that this event is held on the grounds of a university," Asadorian said. "Our aim is to increase education on this issue, increase community awareness and provide people an opportunity to speak out against violence and sexual assault. We should remember that any one of us at any time could be a victim."

Participants also heard remarks and poetry readings from several survivors and supporters and a vocal performance by Afeni Ngozi-Hill. Attendees then marched throughout the campus carrying signs and chanting slogans against violence and assault. Marchers also wore armbands identifying themselves either as survivors or allies.

Open microphones were provided afterward in Dodge Hall for survivors and their supporters to speak of their struggles in overcoming sexual assault. To close the event, a candlelight vigil was held at the Kresge Library front steps to memorialize victims of violence.

"I think this event is a great cause. It's important to support survivors," said senior English major Elizabeth Pellerito. "My best friend is a rape survivor and she's participating in a Take Back the Night event in Ohio."

For assistance in dealing with sexual assault issues, contact OU's **Graham Health and Counseling Center** at (248) 370-3465 or visit the **HAVEN** Web site or contact them at (248) 334-1274.

SUMMARY

More than 100 people participated in OU's Take Back the Night 2003, a nationally recognized event that provides a supportive environment for victims of sexual abuse and their supporters. OU teamed with HAVEN to hold the event on campus for the second consecutive year.

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