

Annual Report

Support—Heal—Educate—Prevent: Helping the Community STOP Sexual Abuse

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Fiscal 2007 Highlights/Successes/Challenges

By Carolee Wynhoff, Executive Director

Education/Prevention Program

Reached 7,183 youth/professionals/citizens through 328 interactive presentations

- Program targets middle & high school youth through age appropriate presentations
 - We seldom leave a school without our educators receiving student disclosures of sexual abuse. Given these opportunities, we connect them with resources.
- Reach other professionals through our tri-annual 32 hour Basic Sexual Assault Awareness Trainings



- Talk with citizen & business groups

Success Measures:

- Seven years ago, at the end of an hour presentation, students surveys showed 68% appropriate understanding of the information presented—today, and for quite some time now, we see 88-92%.
- Continued outreach within the Hispanic community through our Hispanic Outreach Liaison.

On-going Challenges:

- We're fighting the deeply engrained myths associated with sexual abuse/assault
 - Because the public cannot comprehend what the offender did/does, society looks to the victim for reasons the assault took place: she was out too late, she was dressed provocatively, she was drinking, etc.
- We need more staff to reach more of our community, as new audiences still show low understanding of sexual assault issues.
- We want to reach children in elementary school without taking resources away from our successful Middle and High School programs.
- During times of so much direct need, prevention work is hard to fund.

Sexual Assault Center
of Pierce County
633 North Mildred
Suite J

Tacoma, WA
98406-1725

Phone (253) 597-6424

FAX (253) 597-6443

TTY (253) 274-0448

24-Hour Crisis,
Information

& Referral Line:

(253) 474-7273

or (800) 756-7273

Advocacy Program

Provided advocacy services to primary and secondary victims of sexual assault/abuse

- 1,162 documented contacts with victim/survivors through our
 - 24/7 advocacy crisis, information and referral line, or
 - Face-to-face meetings at our office, area hospitals for forensic rape exams, or to report to law enforcement, file orders of protection, and assist through court processes.

Represented agency at community events where agency resources are publicized, information distributed and direct contact made with our community.

Success Measures:

We were able to continue to meet requests for our presentations/services.

On-going Challenges:

- More outreach to our community—we continue to know that many victim/survivors still don't know we exist!
- Insuring that area hospitals meet the needs of community victims more readily.

(Continued on page 3)

What a Ride!!

By Jennifer Quitugua, Advocacy Manager

Last fiscal year was a rollercoaster ride for the advocacy program. For the most part, the program had only one on-site advocate (me) in office and endured the challenges that make one reach deep down for that "something more". I am truly grateful that we only lost a couple of on-call advocates to outside, full-time positions where on-call work was no longer possible.

Like a rollercoaster ride, we rolled up the steep hill of the first quarter using a new data collection system called Infonet. Infonet's use was required by our major state funder and didn't permit integration with the system we were using. When it was decided that we couldn't justify the resources required to maintain two separate systems (our old system gave us information the new system does not), we were forced to drop our existing system--we took the first plunge. During training on the new data system, we were told to expect a decrease in the numbers we were used to reporting. This proved to be true, as under the Infonet system, we needed certain information about a client/caller, in order to make our services "count". In an attempt to comply, we changed our paperwork: highlighting the statistically crucial information fields and readdressed this issue with our advocates at our next monthly meeting. The needs of the caller, however, remain paramount in our conversation/services—if a caller doesn't seem able to furnish us with additional information, we'll simply do without the statistical record-keeping. Another contributing factor to our decreased service numbers was the extended use of our answering service during the course of the year rather than having the calls ring straight to SACPC. With only one advocate in the office during the day it was necessary to forward the crisisline whenever there was a medical/legal advocacy meeting/appointment with a client on/off site. I had foreseen this change hav-



ing an impact: when a person calls a crisisline, he/she wants to talk to someone right away. They don't want to wait a few minutes for a call back from an advocate. Given that there are other community resources a person may call whenever he/she has a question or issue, if they don't get someone right away they move on to the next resource on their list. Often when we returned calls referred by our answering service, we found the line busy or there was no answer. So we're pleased and relieved that we are staffed to a point where the crisisline can ring directly into the office most of the time, again. These are some system and staffing reasons that help explain why our service numbers appear lower than in the past, but many other things remain beyond our control: victims continue to fear seeking help; we believe that despite our efforts, most citizens within our community and many service providers remain unaware of our services; or that societal views continue to re-victimize a crime-victim by not supporting, stigmatizing, blaming and/or judging him/her. At the end of the first quarter's rollercoaster ride, we felt we were steadily traveling forward. We could catch our breath, loosen our grip on the safety bar and maybe even bravely let go of that safety bar for a brief second.

The second quarter climb was not as nerve racking and we could concentrate on how we could deliver services more effectively to those needing and requesting our support and assistance. We did this by training/increasing our pool of volunteer advocates and continued our work within other systems where collaboratively, victim needs are met. We gained experience in assisting victims in obtaining the new sexual assault protection order, which became law in June 2006. Like anything that is new, there was a learning curve. That learning curve existed for everyone involved from judges, commissioners, and attorneys to advocates. The first orders were dealt with through full hearings where judges / commissioners recommended that both the petitioner and respondent return to court with attorneys to litigate the case. While this practice is waning, these extended cases make our roller-

(continued from page 2)

coaster ride feel “never-ending”.

The third quarter ride was full of dips, loops and ended too quickly! Our medical advocacy services remained low, as Forensic Nurse Examiner Services (FNES) at Tacoma General continued growth toward full capacity--unable to maintain a 24-hour service, 100% of the time. This has been an ongoing process that challenges our agency which is torn between supporting victim needs and supporting the rebuilding effort of this wonderful program. We must give voice to how this situation impacts victims. When they find the courage to seek medical attention after an assault, only to be told to, “... return later because a FNES nurse is not available”, we are outraged! It is unbelievable that other medical professionals don't feel the need to “step up” and provide services. We can only guess how many victims fail to return and receive the medical care they need and learn of other support services.

Community events kept us very busy this quarter. Both Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound performed productions of Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*, where advocates and resources were present. These universities donate the proceeds from their productions to fund our agency's programs—we are so touched by their generosity and hard work! During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, advocates delivered posters, book marks and brochures of this year's campaign “Don't get it twisted, silence is not consent!” to middle and high schools, colleges and universities. It was quite a challenge to get schools to post the posters as the districts did not want to be liable for the message. An added disclaimer made them more agreeable to allowing our information to be displayed on school premises.

The fourth quarter was a wild ride full of relief and excitement that this year's additional resources and experience would soon be affording relief. This was where problems, challenges, and deficits disembarked and renewed resources, energy, vision, passion, and dedication climbed aboard for another run. With this said, the loss of on-call advocate, Allen Trimmings from the advocacy rollercoaster is felt, though we welcome his contributions as Education Director.

Congratulations, Allen! As Allen left, the program welcomed Matty Nelson as our daytime client advocate. Like Allen, Matty was an on-call advocate, who had been with our program for five years. She has been a beautiful fit for our need. Along with the reinstatement of the daytime client advocate position, the volunteer advocate pool has grown from two to six. With these added resources, we have been able to start new projects and restart projects that had been placed on the back burner. So come on everyone--join us on an exciting and meaningful ride as we work to support the needs of sexual assault victims. It's helpful to remember that a sexual assault victim's healing journey may resemble that of a rollercoaster ride. ☼

(‘Highlights/Success/Challenges’ continued from page 1)

Therapy Program

Scheduled 1,181 therapy sessions and served 105 clients through one-on-one, couples and family therapy.
Continued monthly drop-in support group and added psycho-educational group to assist community victims
Continued to work to establish further resources within our state and community:
Within the State, our Clinical Director of Therapy Services teaches a large portion of the State CORE Therapy training required of all therapists working in this field, while generating revenue for our program.
Vicarious Trauma training delivered to in-house staff and other community professionals in an effort to permit these professionals to remain healthy and continue to work with victims of crime.

Success Measures:

In monitoring our program, we continue to see evidence of success as measured through client self-evaluation:
Clients indicate they have improved understanding of sexual violence (affects on themselves/families and can better understand the connection between sexual assault and their current symptoms).
Clients feel they have increased confidence in making changes (feel they are making progress and that they have increased control over aspects of their life or symptoms).
We continue to have enough therapists to serve the clients who approach us for therapy services—this is wonderful!

On-going Challenges:

Spanish-speaking sexual assault victim therapists within the community remain scarce. We continue to try and find/hire this expertise. ☼

Education Program Changes for 2008

By Allen Trimmings, Education Director

For the past 8 years the Education Program has interacted with students over 80,000 times.

Our presentations with youth range from Bullying and Sexual Harassment to Date/ Acquaintance Rape, Rape Drugs and Consent and the Law. This program's service delivery has been



achieved mainly through the efforts of our Educator Coordinator. The majority of the Education Director's time has been devoted to making connections through Community Collaborations, conducting professional or specialized trainings within the community, and program administration. The agency added a Hispanic Liaison position to work with the Hispanic Community four years ago. As a new director, I'm impressed by the remarkable work performed by the education program to educate children in the middle and high schools, and professionals in our community.

As the new Education Director, with 4.5 years as an On-Call Advocate for the agency, I have come to understand the goals of the Education Program and have a new vision for its director. After orientation meetings with Carolee Wynhoff, (Executive Director), and Kathy Ward (Education Coordinator) I appreciate the program's history and future. My vision as Director is not to change the program, but to strengthen it with new ideas and re-channeling its resources. With my predecessor's collaborative community work setting a solid

foundation for the program, our Hispanic Liaison and I will be fo-

cus on reaching more of our community students through the expansion of our interactive presentations.

As the New Education Director, my goals for the Education Program consist of:

- Adding Elementary Schools presentations to our curriculum, beginning with two pilot schools.
- Contacting and scheduling interactive presentations within schools that we haven't yet reached.
- Re-connecting with schools we may have lost contact with, since our program resources have been fully-employed through request/reactive scheduling.
- Adding and offering specialized training, as community needs are assessed.
- Beginning collaboration with community agencies that we may have never worked with and those who we could be working with more closely.

Expansion of collaboration with agencies who work primarily with people of color and disabilities. Having only recently begun a new school year, I am proud to say we are working within our first two pilot elementary schools, and have attracted four more interested schools. That puts us in three school districts, Tacoma, Clover Park, and Puyallup. Serving elementary students with three educators conducting school presentations during September, we delivered 47 presentations to 1,288 participants, setting an aggressive pace for this year.

We're off to a great start and I



look forward to Fiscal 2008's experience. ☘

Striving to Serve Our Clients Multi-Faceted Needs

By Stephanie Sacks, Clinical Director of Therapy Services

This year has been a time of much transition. Two therapists, Carol Lentz and Tandra Donohue who had both been at SACPC for several years, left to pursue other interests on a full-time basis. We hired a new 20 hour therapist, Kate Walker who has been with us since last October. She incorporates art therapy and sand tray therapy into her work. This last summer she facilitated wonderfully received workshops for clients on using mindfulness, art and breathing techniques to manage symptoms related to



sexual assault. In addition we are winding down a year with intern Jody Stewart. She volunteered 20 hours a week providing therapy as part of her graduate program. We were recently able to hire Sarah Honig after she spent the last year volunteering in our therapy program to gain more experience working with survivors of sexual assault. We have just welcomed Yun Hee Chang who will be volunteering in our therapy program for the next year. This January we hope to hire a bi-lingual Spanish-speaking therapist.

We continually ask ourselves, "Are we running the program in a way that does the most good and makes sense? Are we meeting our client's needs as fully as we might? What could we improve?" In this vein we took some challenges this year and tried to think "outside the box." We asked ourselves, "What are some things that we really believe would be helpful for our therapy clients (whether those things fall under the category of mental health therapy or not)." In that spirit we began a walking club in the late spring that continued through the summer. We believed that there could be multiple benefits for sexual assault survivors in walking in a safe supportive atmosphere on a regular basis. We found that it was very beneficial but

that despite various attempts to increase attendance participation remained low.

we serve have had major violations involving touch, we knew that receiving massage therapy would be challenging for many but could prove potentially very healing by being able to consent to receive safe, positive, healthy touch. While we had a few clients make use of this option (and feel a large benefit) for many "just the thought of it" proved to be too overwhelming.

Over the last two years the therapy and advocacy program has been offering a drop-in support group. In January of 2007 we added a phase two psycho-educational group for those who had attended the support group for 6 sessions or more. While the drop-in support group continued to have good attendance. The phase 2 group did not. In looking to this January we will be discontinuing the phase 2 psycho-educational group and instead offering (for the first time in a few years) a therapy group for sexual abuse survivors. We feel that many clients will benefit from an opportunity to explore the ways sexual assault has impacted them and learn new ways of coping and interacting through a group.

Looking ahead we are continuing to explore what is working and what isn't. Because we are a sexual assault center, our therapists work with clients whose primary

With the generous support of a local massage therapist, Chiara Wood of The turning Point we also began offering massage therapy gift certificates for those clients who were interested or who the therapist thought might benefit. Given that the clients

issues are sexual assault/abuse related. Our funding and mission dictates this, as does our belief that it is difficult to address sexual assault issues if the client is not relatively stable regarding other issues in their life, (i.e., substance abuse, current domestic violence, other mental health issues) that can significantly impair the clients ability to make use of sexual assault related treatment. This is especially critical when we have a large waiting list for services. Given that we are one of the only treatment programs that will address sexual assault issues for low-income clients we need to use our resources in that direction (treating sexual abuse/assault issues).

It is especially difficult however, for therapists to refer these clients out when it is not clear they will get their needs met elsewhere. Of course we cannot be all things to all people but how can we do more? In this effort we are beginning to look at how we might be able to serve some clients conjointly with other agencies to ensure multiple issues are being addressed so that we might better treat the individual client.

Our work is challenging and our direct work is specialized. Although SACPC's therapy program has existed for about 15 years, I am pleased that our desire remains to effectively meet the needs of sexual assault victims. We believe we are successful in this goal—our clients tell us so! ☘

OUR MISSION

Support—Heal—Educate—Prevent:
Helping the Community STOP Sexual Abuse

The Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County is committed to providing support to victims/ survivors of sexual assault and abuse, their families and friends, as well as challenging the social dynamics that foster sexual victimization.

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633 North Mildred Suite J
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