

Indiana University Kokomo and Family Service Association work to Take Back the Night

How we got started...

The project was started three years ago by our American Democracy Project committee. We wanted to hold a Take Back the Night, and the suggestion was made that we partner with Family Service Association (FSA). FSA is a local organization that hosts “Angel Walk”, an event to raise money for the area’s domestic violence shelter. After meeting together during the fall semester, we decided to hold Take Back the Night/Angel Walk in April.

What is Take Back the Night*?

TBTN is an international rally and march that is organized in local communities with the purpose of spreading an awareness of all forms of violence and oppression against women, children and families. The event is a collaboration of community agencies and other interested persons who are ready to take a stand, express their solidarity, and increase understanding of the fear women live with, of sexual assault, abuse, and harassment. This event originated in England and Germany in 1974 as a protest against the fear that women felt walking the streets at night. The purpose of the march was to bring awareness, empowerment, and encourage action to end violence against women and children.

*Taken from www.takebackthenight.org

What we do...

Take Back the Night/Angel Walk is a semester long series of events focusing on raising awareness about domestic/relationship violence and sexual assault. Several faculty incorporate the theme of the event into their courses. As a result of the course integration, students give poster presentations or have other class work on display during the night of the event.

Classes and student clubs form Angel Walk teams to raise money and walk during the event. Student groups hold fundraisers on campus including benefit concerts, selling paper hands and ribbons, and collecting kitchen supplies and board games for the shelter.

The event starts at 5:30 p.m. Staff from FSA speak about the topic of domestic violence and the local shelter. We have a domestic violence survivor tell her/his story. After the survivor speech, students, faculty, staff, and community members walk a mile course around the campus and community. When everyone returns, refreshments are served to the participants, and student projects are on display.

People who play a big role...

Key individuals include our ADP committee and Family Service Association. The ADP committee works to get the students involved, and FSA does most of the work to get the community excited about the event. These two groups also plan the details and logistics of the event. IU Kokomo’s Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs give the event their support and encourage the faculty to incorporate it into their classrooms.

Successes...

This past April was our 3rd TBTN/Angel walk. We had 350 walkers/participants, 18 courses that included the project into their syllabi, and we raised \$13,500. During our second annual Take Back the Night/Angel walk, we had around 400 participants, 15 courses involved the event in their syllabi, and the students and community raised \$12,000 for the shelter. Our first year, we had 10 classes that included the event in their syllabi, 80 participants in the walk, and we raised around \$12,000.

Problems we encountered...

Weather plays a huge factor in this event. We've had beautiful weather during the last two events, so people were more apt to participate in the walk. The first year, when we had only 80 participants, it was cold and rainy.

We're not sure the sustainability of this event. We know at some point the campus community going to be ready for a new cause.

What we learned...

Every time we do a project we always learn things that need to be tweaked and could be done a little differently.

We learned that our students really enjoy the opportunity to do hands on work that makes a difference. For example, our Computer Graphics Technology students put together marketing pieces as their class project. The faculty member was amazed at her students' enthusiasm about the project. Seven CGT students designed an entire marketing campaign which included t-shirt, poster, sticker, and flyer design. Participants in the event voted on their favorite design. The winner will have his/her design used as next year's Take Back the Night marketing materials.

Assessment...

We survey participants during the event. Also, we sent surveys to faculty and FSA staff. All three surveys are indirect assessment. In the future, we would like to do more direct assessment of the program.

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