

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact –Danielle Rush

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Communications Specialist
2300 S. Washington Street
Kokomo, IN 46904-9003
(765) 455-9414
darush@iuk.edu

IU Kokomo, community rally together against domestic violence

KOKOMO, Ind. — More than 300 Indiana University Kokomo students, faculty, staff, and community supporters braved Tuesday evening’s rain to take a stand against domestic violence and to show support for its victims.

Participants in the 8th annual Take Back the Night/Angel Walk walked a mile, north on Washington Street, wearing rain ponchos and carrying umbrellas, as part of a fund raiser for the Family Service Association of Howard County (FSA) domestic violence shelter.

Interim Chancellor Susan Sciame-Giesecke, who is vice president of the FSA board of directors, said every dollar raised helps keep the shelter open, to provide a safe place for victims and their children to get help.

“I know we must give back, to help the most vulnerable in this community,” Sciame-Giesecke said. “We are passionate and committed to this particular issue on our campus.”

The event, sponsored by the IU Kokomo American Democracy Project and FSA, began with a rally in Alumni Hall. Students in allied health, humanities and social sciences, business, education, and nursing provided educational presentations about recognizing the signs of abuse, workplace bullying, effects of domestic abuse on young children, and elder abuse, among other topics. They also accepted clothing donations for women at the shelter.

Education student Erica Bennett said as a future elementary school teacher, it is important for her to know the signs of potential abuse, so she can take action to protect her students if necessary.

She did not mind walking in the rain, saying she was inspired by the story shared by domestic violence survivor Christine Smith.

“It was emotional to hear her story,” she said. “She is so strong to be able to stand up and tell what happened to her. It makes it more real to hear a personal story, rather than just someone telling you facts.”

Smith, from Kokomo, told a harrowing story of physical and verbal abuse by her parents that began when she was a young child.

“I found out in kindergarten that my home life was different,” she said. “My home was not a place of security and love. I became an expert at pushing people away, even though I wanted to be loved.”

That abuse robbed her of her self-esteem, and made her hesitant to have her own family as an adult.

“I was afraid to be a parent,” Smith said. “I made a choice not to be like my parents. I did not carry on that cycle. It stopped with me. You must protect your children. You have the power to step up and break the cycle of violence.”

Business students Stephanie Scott, Sarah Parr, Jarron Warner, and Catrina Pearson were among those displaying projects during the rally. They researched gun violence in America’s schools for their employment law class.

Scott said it is important for students to learn about all kinds of domestic violence, including about the signs, how to help someone, and how to get help if needed.

“We need to raise awareness, and let people know this problem exists,” she said. The more education that is available, the better chance we have to break the cycle of violence.”

Barbara Hall, FSA director of development, said the organization would accept donations for the event through May 1. Teams that did not come because of the rain may still turn in their money. Donations may be made at the FSA office, 618 S. Main St., Kokomo.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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