



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
KOKOMO

What matters. Where it matters.

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact –Danielle Rush

April 25, 2014

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

IU Kokomo rallies to support domestic violence victims at annual Take Back the Night and Angel Walk.

KOKOMO, Ind. — Indiana University Kokomo advocates for victims of domestic violence, hosting the annual Take Back the Night and Angel Walk.

More than 300 people participated in the one-mile walk. Student organization members and teams from the community walked side-by-side, demonstrating not only support for the Family Service Association of Howard County's domestic violence shelter (FSA), but determination to end domestic violence.

Chancellor Susan Sciame-Giesecke welcomed participants to campus, and said she is proud of the long partnership with the FSA.

"We want to encourage our students to stand, support, and advocate for something, and create change," she said. "We will not stand for domestic violence, we will make a change."

The event kicked off with a rally in Alumni Hall, with music and educational displays created by students in Allied Health, business, education, humanities, and nursing classes.

While the event had the feeling of celebration that goes with fundraising, one local resident gave a sobering reminder of the event's importance.

Doran Gwyn, who grew up in the Appalachian Mountains, said he, his mother, and his two sisters endured daily abuse from his stepfather for seven long years, because there was no shelter like the one in Howard County where they lived.

"That's what today is all about," he said. "My mother didn't have any help, anywhere to go to get away. Today is about rallying to say 'This is not OK, under any

circumstances, and we should not tolerate this in our community, or anywhere else.”

He told a harrowing story of watching his stepfather cut his mother’s throat when he did not like a meal she prepared, and of dodging bullets the man shot into their trailer.

Gwyn escaped by joining the Special Forces, thinking it would give him a way to become tough.

“No one would be able to beat me or touch my mother or sisters again,” he said. “We all believed if we ran, he would kill us.”

His message also was one of encouragement, because he married his long time sweetheart, and has had a successful marriage of more than 30 years, breaking the cycle of abuse.

“I’ve spent a lifetime dealing with the effects of my childhood,” he said. “I am a survivor, but more important than that, I am a striver. I was always reaching for something better. If my story can help someone else strive to be better, that’s why I’m here.”

Hearing Gwyn’s story personalized the issue for Kory George, a junior from Peru. He participated in the walk with the campus Phi Kappa Tau colony, and said it complements their mission of being men of character.

“It is a good reminder that if we see someone in a domestic violence situation, we must have the courage to reach out and help,” he said. “Now we know what resources are available to do that.”

Members of the Enactus student organization volunteer at the domestic violence shelter all year, offering career preparedness workshops and organizing clothing drives for the residents. They had a table at the rally to accept clothing donations as well.

Senior Leann Cook said it is important to raise awareness of the issue.

“Domestic violence is something that isn’t talked about a lot, and a lot of people think it can’t happen to someone they know,” she said. “We need to know the signs, and how we can help someone who is a victim. It is also a reminder that this is not acceptable behavior in our own relationships. We have the ability to make a difference.”

New media student Colton Frew, who designed the event T-shirt, said IU Kokomo has a responsibility to use its large outreach to educate the community about domestic violence, and about the services offered by FSA.

“It’s a great organization to help,” he said.

FSA Executive Director Judy Dennis is honored to team with IU Kokomo, not just for educational opportunities, but also in fund raising efforts.

The shelter is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and expenses have been larger than usual this year because of the winter weather.

“We are meeting the need, and with your continued support, we will continue to meet the need in our community,” she said.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

-END-