

Rape is a hate crime, not a sex crime

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in charges being laid. Even so, the Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre is the only one providing support and assistance for sexual assault survivors and their families in the province online. The actual number of incidents reported is estimated to be much higher than 819, the report rate of such incidents is only six per cent.

Lautard, one of two guest speakers during the week, spoke about what the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre provides. Their main service is a 24-hour crisis line that's been around since 1976. It provides information on legal procedures, medical concerns, and how to deal with the police. The services are for women who've been recently assaulted as well as those who have been assaulted in the past. All the services are completely anonymous and confidential.

She also dispelled some of the myths people have surrounding rape and sexual assault. People imagine a rapist to be like the stereotypes on TV. People have the crazy guy with a knife in the back alley pictured in our heads, but the reality is that most sexual assaults happen in a home, whether it be the assailant's, the victim's, or belonging to a third party known to both of them.

Actually having a weapon is not a common feature, and the assailant, is most likely someone you already know.

It's easy to blame certain factors such as dress, location, and carelessness, but the fact is, sexual assault can happen to anyone, anywhere, and it is never their fault.

Rape is a hate crime, not a sex crime. It stems from anger, sadism, and a need for power. Rape isn't sex, it's violence based on dehumanization; we see this dehumanization all through North American society: in violent images, competition, and objectification of women.

"It's much easier to hurt [something you perceive as] an object than a human," Lautard said.

The Crisis Centre has an extensive referral base and can guide the friends and family of survivors in how to deal with the short and long-term effects of sexual assault, including flashbacks, nightmares, fear of being alone, and self-esteem and identity issues. Supporting the survivor includes remembering, no matter how hard, to let the survivor reclaim her power.

"Our overall philosophy is that we want to inform and support women so that they can make their own decisions," Lautard said.



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managed to communicate and help the team in ways he never imagined.

"The orthotics people that were there to make the limbs, the prosthetics and casts [said] they didn't have as many tools as they would have liked so I made a few saws out of wood and jigsaw blades. I didn't really see myself doing that, or [rewiring] a pizza oven for that matter," Sparkes said.

Dr. Colleen O'Connell, the physician in charge of the team, said the two nursing students were very helpful.

"I was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm and work that the two UNB students did," said O'Connell. "They were very strong contributors to the team, interacted well, and took on whatever role they were asked to."

O'Connell said she's really glad they chose to participate. When she was in university, she also volunteered doing international work.

"It's getting that early exposure that changes the way you think, the way you train, the way you act... getting this kind of experience when you're young is going to make a world of difference," O'Connell added.

She said the trip to Haiti is as much about helping the Haitians as it is helping the participants learn about the culture.

"They will look at world news differently, they may think about political situations and the decisions they make when our own political officials have foreign policy debates. It makes you think differently and it makes you more global and a more responsible citizen."

O'Connell, who did her undergraduate degree at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, her medical degree at Memorial University in Newfoundland and her residency at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, said people need to realize helping one person is just as important as helping a group of people.

"I think people should know that there are definite things that we as individuals can do to make a difference. The situation is not hopeless. It is important to be able to make small contributions that



Submitted to The Brunswickan

Marc Arseneau, (middle, burgundy shirt), said he hopes to have the opportunity to return to Haiti next year with the non-profit organization Healing Hands for Haiti.

may only help an individual but... that can make a world of difference to them," she said.

O'Connell works at the Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation in Fredericton, New Brunswick and says it's rewarding seeing an individual overcome his or her difficulties.

Arseneau and Sparkes also found helping individuals overcome their hardships inspirational.

"I worked at a general hospital for a day... in the pediatric unit on a specific ward called the Wing of Abandoned Children," recalled Sparkes. "About 95 per cent [of the children] were malnourished so it was pretty sad to see."

"There was a kid [in that ward] that was not stimulated. He wouldn't move. He'd just sit there and look [around] but throughout the day, I got to pick him up and play with him and he got a hold of me and laughed. He fell asleep on me for a few hours, so that was pretty inspiring. It made it all worth it," Sparkes said.

Arseneau agreed and said playing with the children and seeing them smile made a huge difference in his day. "To see them running around happy to see a skipping rope, happy to kick a soccer ball, it was quite rewarding."

Along with providing medical supplies like antibiotics and pain medication, and the materials needed to make prosthesis, Team Canada brought with them walkers, canes, diapers, medical textbooks in French, toys, drawing paper and crayons for

the children.

"There are two main things that we do [in Haiti]," explained O'Connell. "One is that we are providing direct care for patients with disabilities, so these are usually adults and children with things like strokes, amputations... or developmental delay."

"The second thing we're doing is teaching and training. We're working with patients who are being trained how to be rehab workers, [and] how to work with a disability."

She said the teams who participate in Healing Hands for Haiti are spending a lot of time working with students, in their early 20s, who are planning to work in orphanages and nursing homes. They are also training groups of people, who are technicians, how to make artificial limbs and braces.

"You have to focus on the things that you are able to do... If we're able to educate one mother on how to take care of her child properly, feed that child... [that child will have] a great potential to grow and develop properly," said O'Connell. "That's going to affect not only the child, but also the mother, the family, the extended family."

In Haiti, the majority of the population doesn't have access to medical care, an education, a safe source of drinking water, or a sufficient amount of food to feed their families. According to O'Connell, there is no national system of getting rid of garbage or sewage. This country has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the

world, and O'Connell said life expectancy is only 46 or 47 years old. Because of the poor living conditions, Healing Hands for Haiti was created.

The non-profit organization began in 1998 with US physiatrist, Dr. Jeffrey Randle. His dream was to do humanitarian work in the poorest country in the western hemisphere. With several medical professionals, including his co-worker Susan Gleason who had previous experience directing small non-profit organizations, the first team arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, and set up a clinic. Since then, volunteers from all over the United States have been participating in the organization. O'Connell has been to Haiti three times, twice representing Canada.

She has high hopes for Canada's future participation in Healing Hands for Haiti.

"I'm thinking that next year, because we've had so many people express an interest in going, that we'll probably put together two or three teams at least [from] Canada."

Sparkes and Arseneau both said they'd return to Haiti in a second if the opportunity arose. In fact, both students are hoping to spend their vacation time volunteering.

"[Going to Haiti was] definitely a life-changing event; it puts things into perspective," said Arseneau.

"Hopefully we'll have the opportunity to go back next year. It's opened up a hidden interest in me. In the future, I'd definitely like to do a term with Doctors Without Borders or something like that," he added.

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