



Greensburg, PA

April 2007

Theories of sexual aggression and victimization have increasingly emphasized the role of rape myths in the perpetuation of sexual assault. Rape myths are attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women.

Lonsway, Kimberly A. & Fitzgerald, Louise F. ,
RAPE MYTHS (Abstract),
Psychology of Women Quarterly 18 (2), 133-164.

THE POWER OF TRUTH

In late 2006, Kofi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations, released his "Message on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women." In speaking about violence against women, he writes: "Fighting this scourge requires us to change a mindset which is still too common and deep-seated. To demonstrate, once and for all, that when it comes to violence against women, there are no grounds for tolerance and no tolerable excuses." (See *page 2 for the statement in its entirety.*)

In our last two newsletters, we invited you to join us in transforming our society into one which does not tolerate domestic or sexual violence. We continued that journey with you by addressing root causes of this violence that is perpetrated predominantly against women. We now turn to one phenomenon that creates the "common and deep-seated" societal attitudes that allow the perpetuation of this violence: myths. Myths are stories or popular beliefs that are unsupported by facts. Myths serve a purpose – they can create or enhance an illusion of safety or control over a situation. They can provide an explanation for something we don't understand.

As you read the following myths and facts, ask yourself: Did I accept this myth as truth, until the facts were presented to me here? What other things do I believe about sexual violence that may be based on myths rather than truth? What purpose do these myths fulfill? Do they help me feel safer or more in control of the world around me? What can I do to help spread the truth about sexual violence? To break the cycle of violence, we must break the cycle of myth.

- Myth:** Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.
- Truth:** Rapists use sexual violence as a way to achieve power and control over another individual. Rapists are not motivated by a need for sex. Humans are capable of controlling how they choose to act on or express sexual needs and urges.
- Myth:** Rape would never happen to me because I'm not the kind of person who would be raped.
- Truth:** Rape can happen to anyone. Rape victims come from all social, ethnic, cultural and financial backgrounds. Rapists generally choose their victims based on opportunity and perceived vulnerability. A woman who appears to be alone or otherwise vulnerable may be more likely to attract a rapist's attention.

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**A Message on the International Day for the
Elimination of Violence Against Women
from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
Observed on November 25, 2006**

Violence against women causes untold misery, harms families across generations, and impoverishes communities. It stops women from fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth, and undermines development. When it comes to violence against women, there are no civilized societies.

Last month, I issued an in-depth study which showed that half of humankind lives under this threat -- in every continent, country and culture, regardless of income, class, race or ethnicity. This is so, even though we live in a world order where human rights have been recognized in law, and guaranteed in international instruments; even though we have learnt that the enjoyment of human rights is essential to the well-being of the individual, the community and the world; even though, at the 2005 World Summit, leaders pledged to redouble efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Fighting this scourge requires us to change a mindset which is still too common and deep-seated. To demonstrate, once and for all, that when it comes to violence against women, there are no grounds for tolerance and no tolerable excuses.

For years, women's organizations and movements round the world have worked tirelessly to take violence against women out of the private domain and into the public sphere -- into the arena of State accountability. Many States have enacted and implemented effective laws, and provided comprehensive and gender-sensitive services to victims. And there has also been progress in creating international standards.

It is time to take these efforts to the next level. We in the United Nations must play a stronger, better coordinated and more visible leadership role. Member States must do more to implement the international legal and policy framework to which they have committed themselves. And all of us must form strong and effective partnerships with civil society, which has such a crucial role to play on this issue at every level.

Together, we must work to create an environment where violence against women is not tolerated. By mandating me to undertake the in-depth study, United Nations Member States have signaled that they are ready to do that. Now, with the study and its recommendations in hand, we must summon the necessary political commitment and resources. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, let all of us - men and women alike -- join forces in this mission.

Myths, continued from page 1

- Myth:** Most sexual crimes are committed by strangers.
- Truth:** Despite the over-representation of stranger rapes in the media, the majority of sexual assaults occur between people who know each other. According to the U.S. Department of Justice National Crime Victimization Survey, 62% to 92% of rapes are committed by known assailants. Sex offenders are often partners, spouses, friends, or acquaintances of the victim who use sexual violence deliberately as a means to exact power or control over the victim.

Note: The myths in this list relate to sexual violence since April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We'll be sharing a list of myths related to domestic violence in our summer/fall newsletter.

Join us in taking action against sexual and domestic violence. When you hear about it, read about it, or see it: name the violence for what it is, challenge society's acceptance of it, work to change it.

**This year, we retire our *Golf Ining*
and welcome back (by popular de-
mand!)**

an event at

Rizzo's Malabar Inn

Una Sera del Dare

(An Evening of Giving)

on Monday, September 24, 2007

from 5:30 to 8:00 pm

featuring an open bar and
Rizzo's celebrated cuisine

Stay tuned for more details!

April is

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Speak Up, Demand Change!

Not-Just-For-Mother's Day Card

Again this year, Blackburn Center offers a meaningful way to mark important occasions and to honor the special people in your life. The card, this year designed by Mary Lou Corrao, a Blackburn Center Education Specialist, will be hand-colored by clients and friends of the agency. The theme is based on a proverb:

"All the flowers of all the tomorrows are
in the seeds of today."

The message will appear inside the card. For each \$25 gift to Blackburn Center, we will send a card to the person you specify. For any level of giving, your name and the name of the person or occasion you celebrate will be included in the summer edition of our newsletter. If you prefer, you may make your contribution anonymously.

We have enclosed a remittance envelope for your convenience.

We hope you will consider this way of touching the lives of thousands of people in the community as you touch the lives of those you honor.

On behalf of those we serve, we thank you
for sharing in our mission.

IN MEMORY

Mariann Clark, an Education Specialist with Blackburn Center for eight years, lost a courageous fight with cancer on Saturday, March 3, 2007. Mariann's energy, humor and love of teaching and children were central to her work. She left her mark in many classrooms in Westmoreland County and will be missed by many.

Something to remember for
2007, as we finish the 2006
tax season:

You can donate your car, motorcycle, van, truck or boat to Blackburn Center and receive a tax deduction.

Call us at 724-837-9540 and ask
for the Administrative Team.

Men Against Sexual Violence (MASV) Taskforce Brings National Leader to Local Universities

Ben Atherton-Zeman performed his nationally recognized one-man play, *Voices of Men*, at Seton Hill University and the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg on February 8, 2007. His messages, presented in a creative format, were clear: date rape/dating violence are widespread — and preventable. Ben also led two workshops on *Organizing Men Against Sexual Violence* for student leaders and professionals in Westmoreland County on Feb. 9, 2007 on both campuses. Over 325 participants attended the performances and workshops. The MASV Taskforce is a project of Blackburn Center and the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

The MASV Taskforce will be bringing Jackson Katz back to this area in Fall 2007 and will implement a Peer Mentor Program for college males to guide and work with middle and high school students to prevent date rape/dating violence.

MANY THANKS to those who donated time, talent and resources to make Blackburn Center's Donor Recognition event, *Giving Thanks*, on November 16, 2006 a success:

ARAMARK/Seton Hill University

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Julie Ebersole

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Blackburn Center

Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence is a private, not-for-profit organization that provides 24-hour hotline services, counseling, advocacy and support groups to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, incest, child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment; emergency shelter is available to survivors of domestic violence and their dependent children. Blackburn Center also provides community education, school student awareness programs, and in-service professional trainings throughout Westmoreland County.

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A copy of official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

**This newsletter sponsored
by FISA Foundation.**

Things We Need

Please put items in bold at the top of your list.

FOOD

- Nonperishable food
- Sugar-free treats and drinks

CHILDREN'S ITEMS

- Full-size crib**
- Toddler and booster car seats**
- Stroller**
- Play sand (four 50 lb. bags)
- Fabric markers
- Diaper rash cream
- Baby wipes
- Disposable diapers (large sizes)

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Cleaning and laundry products
- Fabric softener sheets
- Mops and brooms
- Paper products: paper towels and toilet paper
- Kitchen towel sets with dish cloths
- Light bulbs (60 W & 3-way)
- Liquid hand soap refills
- Small appliances and coffee makers
- Alarm clocks**
- Hand-held can openers

- Sheet sets (full) and white pillowcases**
- Bath towels, hand towels and wash cloths
- Mattress covers (twin & full, vinyl, zippered)
- Flashlights & batteries
- Mattress pads (twin & full)

TOILETRIES (Hotel-size items are no longer needed.)

- Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Hair brushes, hair dryers, curling irons
- Hair care/skin care products for African Americans
- Shaving cream and denture adhesive
- Unopened, over-the-counter medicines
- Lip balm for chapped lips

- Saline solution

MISCELLANEOUS

- Seasonal decorations and umbrellas
- Phone cards
- Gift cards: Wal-Mart, Target, grocery stores**
- Gasoline cards (\$10, \$15)**

CLOTHING (only the items listed)

- Sweat suits (women's M, L and XL sizes)**
- Nightwear (adults, kids)**
- White tee shirts
- Underwear (women's, sizes 5 - 8)**



Toll free Hotline 1.888.832.2272

724.836.1122

Greensburg Area Hotline

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