

# Taking away the pain by taking back the night

WAVE gives survivors of sexual assault a chance to speak up

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The Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education program at New Mexico State University is hoping to give survivors and those impacted by sexual and dating violence a chance to share experiences in the upcoming Take Back the Night print project.

John Rivers, WAVE community organizer, is leading the event, which will allow survivors of sexual violence to submit a writing piece to be published in a collective work to raise awareness of relationship violence.

"[Sexual violence] happens more often than we think," said WAVE Program Coordinator Debra Darmata. "The survivors can come out [of the experience] feeling alone."

From 2002 to 2005, only 22 percent of rapes, 18 percent of sexual assaults and 5 percent of attempted rapes committed against students were reported to police, according to American College Health Association report "College Violence White Paper."

Darmata and Rivers said the project is important, because it will give people who have not had the chance to express what has happened to them an opportunity to do so while bringing awareness to the community.

Rivers said 2010 will mark the first year of the event, and the publication will run in conjunction with Take Back the Night, an annual, nationwide event mainly held on college campuses to help survivors of sexual violence speak out against it.

Submissions are due by March 26 and will be kept confidential if the writer chooses not to share his or her name, Darmata said.

"Not talking about it is what perpetuates it," Darmata said. "We are hoping to take the shame out of it. This should not be hush-hush."

Darmata also said if sexual violence is more publicized, hopefully people will see the signs of potential sexual violence. According to ACHA, 18- to 24-year-old women are the highest risk group for sexual violence. While only 6.3 percent of NMSU students admitted to being sexually assaulted in 2009, according to the CORE and Student Lifestyles Survey,

Darmata and Rivers said it is important to have such a publication to allow people to share experiences.

Rivers said he is not looking for any specific number of stories to come in, but he hopes to get enough to make an impact on survivors and the community.

To submit a story, e-mail [HelpTakeBack@gmail.com](mailto:HelpTakeBack@gmail.com), or drop off a print copy at the WAVE office at the west entrance of Monagle Hall. Contact information will be kept confidential.

Darmata said if any student needs help relating to sexual violence, he or she can call the campus crisis line at 646-2255 or the counseling center at 646-2731.

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