

Survivor encourages others to speak out

WHEN STEPHEN D. GRUBMAN-BLACK, professor of Women's Studies and Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island, was asked to testify at a legislative hearing in support of funding of programs for child victims of sexual assault, it was a defining moment.

As a victim of child sexual abuse, Steve was accustomed to the silence of the unbelieved, the shamed, the guilty — the tragic loneliness and isolation that often become life partners of child abuse victims.

But mid-way through that testimony, as Steve spoke passionately on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves, a transformation began to take place.

"I felt heard for the first time. I felt empowered. I looked around and thought, these suits are really listening and they are even taking notes."

For the first time since his repressed memories surfaced, Steve was taken seriously and he was believed.



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It was in 1985, when Steve was an adult, that the flashbacks began. His search for help and support led him to initiate a workshop for child abuse survivors at a conference held by the National Organization of Men Against Sexism. The response was so positive; he formed a support group.

"It was in the support group I was first believed and taken seriously by other adults who had survived the effects of childhood sexual victimization," he said. "Something had been taken from us," he said. "We all shared those feelings of iso-

lation. The group gave us a safe place for discussion and helped us move from victim to recovering survivor."

People who are interested in joining the SATRC Advocacy Group should be forewarned, Steve advised, that these are not therapy sessions: "People should know up front that SATRC's Advocacy Group is not therapy. Participation is a way to be heard on behalf of themselves and those who have been silenced through victimization. And it's important to keep bringing up this issue to the public consciousness."

As Steve — a former SATRC advocate and board member — began the process of recovery others began to notice a subtle change in his appearance and attitude.

"I began to radiate self-confidence," he said. "I began to wear vibrant colors. Even my students noticed the change in my attitude and demeanor."

And Steve has words of advice for men and women who bear the name of survivor: "Give yourself a chance. Believe that you can make a difference and that you are worth it. Instead of having someone speak for you, speak up and out for yourself."

Survivor Advocacy Group to give voice to the silenced

SATRC announces the formation of an Advocacy Group. The group is designed to empower survivors to play a critical role in helping to increase awareness about sexual assault and child abuse through public speaking and advocacy.

Following a comprehensive screening process to ensure appropriate placement, group members may choose from a menu of roles. They may work with the media, participate in education programs, testify on legislation and speak before large and small groups.

Participants must minimally attend a sexual assault 101 presentation and are encouraged to attend SATRC's 36-hour volunteer program for advocates. A mandatory speakers' program will be offered for those interested in public speaking.

An informational meeting about the SATRC Advocacy Group will be held in May. For more information, contact Marlene Roberti, director of policy, at 401-421-4100, ext. 228.

HELP US...HELP OTHERS

The **Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Center of Rhode Island** is the state's only agency organized to deal specifically with the issues of sexual assault as a community concern. Its mission is to reduce the trauma and the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence.

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April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

IF YOU THINK YOU DON'T KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED, think again. One out of every four girls and one out of every six boys will be abused before the age of 18. The average age of reported sexual abuse is 9 and it is highly likely that the perpetrator will be someone the child knows, loves and trusts.

“One of the things I hear a lot from parents is they believe predators are mostly strangers jumping out of bushes, but in fact it is most likely someone they know,” Heather McAfoose, prevention educator, said.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and SATRC is taking this opportunity to provide families with useful tools to initiate conversations with their children.

“When we do programs in the schools, what we find is that quite often children are getting incorrect information from their parents, or they are not getting any information,” Heather said. “One of the hardest things for parents to do is to talk to their children about sexuality. We advise parents to have many talks so that their children feel comfortable coming to them for information about all issues relating to sexual abuse.”

To assist parents and other adult family members to communicate with their children, SATRC will offer five workshops, held throughout the state, during April. The workshops are free of charge and

Keeping Kids Safe activities will be provided for the children while adults attend the workshops.

“We want everyone to become more aware of how prevalent sexual abuse is and we want to teach parents and other adult family members to communicate more effectively,” Heather said.

Among the information provided in the workshops are important steps to preventing child sexual abuse:

Know the facts Realities should influence decisions regarding your child.

Prevent opportunities If you eliminate or reduce one adult/one child situations, you dramatically lower the risk of sexual abuse for your child.

Talk to your child Children often keep abuse a secret, but barriers can be broken down by talking openly.

Be aware Don't expect obvious signs when a child is being sexually abused.



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Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Center of Rhode Island

300 Richmond Street, Suite 205
Providence, R.I. 02903-4222

401-421-4100 Fax: 401-454-5565
www.satrc.org • e-mail: info@satrc.org

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FROM THIS DESK

Peg Langhammer

SATRC Executive Director



PERHAPS IT IS NO ACCIDENT that Sexual
Assault Awareness Month falls in April when
new growth is bursting through the earth
and green leaves are unfurling on the trees.

At SATRC, we too are experiencing new
growth and change that will find us — in
the coming months and years — seeking
new directions and responses to critical
needs.

To help us through this process, we are
embarking on a strategic plan involving
board, staff, volunteers, community mem-
bers and survivors.

One of the more significant needs we face
is finding adequate space for our expand-
ing programs and services.

With the assistance of U.S. Senator Jack
Reed, SATRC was recently awarded a
\$300,000 congressional appropriation,
which will allow us to begin addressing our
space needs and expand the services of our
Rhode Island Children's Advocacy Center.

In our role as advocates for a community
response to sexual assault, we recognize the
importance of prevention and early detec-
tion of child sexual abuse. That is why this

year our focus for April's Sexual Assault
Awareness Campaign is on providing infor-
mation and useful tools for talking to chil-
dren about sexual abuse.

Five family workshops are being held
throughout April. Radio and newspaper
ads and brochures will promote impor-
tant prevention information, and in the
pages of this special newsletter, you will
read about sexual assault from two differ-
ent perspectives.

As part of our new initiatives, SATRC an-
nounces the development of the Survivor
Advocacy Group, designed to help sur-
vivors give voice to what all too often is
their silent shame.

Finally, although we have grown and
changed over the years, SATRC remains
constant in its mission. As we emerge
from winter's doldrums into the promise
of spring, we urge everyone to grow with
us and to respond to the urgent needs of
victims, survivors and their families.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH ACTIVITIES AND FAMILY WORKSHOPS ARE SPONSORED THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF:



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★ JUNE 28, 2004

**7TH ANNUAL SATRC GOLF
TOURNAMENT** for the benefit of the
RI Children's Advocacy Center. Alpine Country
Club, Cranston, RI. **Shotgun start: 12:30 p.m.**
Co-chairs: Phil Rivers and Bob Vincent. For
corporate sponsorships or foursomes, contact
Grace Quintin at 401-421-4100, ext. 214.

★ AUGUST 14, 2004

**UNDER THE STARS
BY THE SEA** North Beach
Clubhouse, Narragansett Town Beach,
Narragansett, RI. For advance
reservations or sponsorship
opportunities, contact **Grace Quintin**
at 401-421-4100, ext. 214.

NSVRC Award winner is a woman with a mission

Each year, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) recognizes and commends one person from each state who passionately and tirelessly works to support victims of sexual assault and their families. Recognizing her commitment and dedication to promote safety and raise awareness in her community, SATRC nominated Marilyn Kelley, nurse educator at Burrillville High School for the prestigious award. Marilyn will be presented with her award certificate in April as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

MARILYN KELLEY is a woman on a mission. As the 2004 Rhode Island recipient of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) Award for outstanding advocacy and community work in ending sexual violence, her personal goal is to provide aid and comfort to victims and their families, and to educate the public to their plight.

Marilyn, a nurse educator at Burrillville High School, has worked extensively with SATRC and Sandy Malone, coordinator of prevention education, for the past 10 years providing high school students with prevention and education programs.

“Marilyn has been instrumental in maintaining educational programs at the high school,” Sandy, said. “She counsels and is a strong advocate for victims and their families, referring them to appropriate medical and counseling resources, as well as supporting them through the judicial process.”

“Kids are thirsty for information,” Marilyn said. “The kids like the SATRC program and it opens up important discussions.”

Marilyn has observed many changes in teens — most of them startling:

“Children today are more precocious. They are dating in the sixth grade and we



“People have to go out on a limb. They have to speak up. They will be surprised by how many others will support their efforts.”

are seeing incidents of sexual activities at a much earlier age.”

She places much of the blame on the media, which glorifies degradation and violence against women, a myriad of family issues, including domestic violence, absentee parents and a lack of role models.

“The result is that girls think it’s okay to be used for sex, and to be dominated by their boyfriends, because that’s what they see on television,” she added.

About two years ago, a sexual assault case in Burrillville set off a firestorm of controversy. Marilyn found herself in the middle of it. Her affiliation with SATRC would help sustain her during the time a spotlight was shone on a community severed in half in the aftermath of the assault.

The publicity spearheaded by *Providence Journal* reporter Kate Bramsen’s series of articles — “Rape in a Small Town” — helped turn the tide.

“What has changed for the better in Burrillville is an awareness and heightened sensitivity from the community. We saw so much injustice in the way the victim was treated. The entire community took sides. I was taken aback by the lack of support and empathy for the victim. Even some members of my own faculty blamed her,” she said.

Although some in Burrillville remain angry at the perceived injustice against the perpetrator, many more saw an opportunity to educate the community and work towards prevention of further assaults. Churches banded together and donated funds to SATRC ensuring continuation of its education programs at the high school. Many public and private schools in Rhode Island used the articles

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SATRC'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY BLUES EVENT



SATRC's 30th anniversary Blues Event raises \$25,000 and brings out many friends and supporters to help celebrate. Among the guests are, seated from left, State Rep. William McManus, Jonathan Duquenoy, Katlyn Duquenoy, Linda Lynch and Rosemary Soave. Standing from left, Dennis Lynch, Irene Lynch, Christin Lynch and Attorney General Patrick Lynch.

On the Frontline *continued*

as a springboard for discussion in various subject areas.

"Finally someone is talking about sexual assault and how it affects victims' lives," Marilyn said. "Their ability to trust, to form relationships has been stolen from them. The effects are far-reaching and long lasting.

"People have to go out on a limb. They have to speak up. They will be surprised by how many others will support their efforts."

As for Marilyn, her work continues in the trenches. "I am a woman with a mission. I want to be there for victims and their families and make the public aware of what they go through."

U.S. CONGRESSMAN LANGEVIN VISITS RICAC



Rep. James Langevin (center) visits the RI Children's Advocacy Center for a tour and informational meeting. With him are from left, Jane Ferguson, Child Safe Clinic, Hasbro Children's Hospital; Peg Langhammer, SATRC executive director; Detective Patrick Shea, Newport Police Department; Lt. Michael Leveillee, Johnston Police Department; Susan Urso, assistant attorney general/juvenile division; Stacy Abjornson, CAC forensic interviewer/coordinator; Tim Lyons, Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) intern and Karen Deorsey-Smith, DCYF.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

continued from front

Be prepared Learn where to go, who to call and how to react.

Take action when needed The future well being of a child is at stake. If you suspect there is a case of child sexual abuse, contact the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) at 1-800-RICHILD.

Be part of the solution Volunteer and financially support organizations that fight the tragedy of child sexual abuse.

SATRC offers free workshops

IN RECOGNITION of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and in response to a growing and critical need, SATRC offers workshops throughout Rhode Island during April. The workshops are for parents and other adult family members. Keeping Kids Safe activities will be available for children while adults attend the workshops. A light dinner will be provided. Take advantage of one of these workshops. You and your family will be glad you did.

APRIL 21 • 5:30-7 P.M.

Family Workshop
Children's Museum, Providence, RI

APRIL 22 • 5:30-7 P.M.

Family Workshop
Town Library, Narragansett, RI

APRIL 27 • 5:30-7 P.M.

Parent meeting (in Spanish)
Children's Museum, Providence, RI

APRIL 28 • 5:30-7 P.M.

Family Workshop
Newport Public Library, Newport, RI

APRIL 29 • 5:30-7 P.M.

Family Workshop
Woonsocket HeadStart, Woonsocket, RI

For further information and to register, call SATRC at 401.421.4100, ext. 212.