

Tucson Youth Take Back the Night 2006



This flag represents the 1,800 rapes that were reported to the police in AZ last year.

This past April, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault's Rape Prevention and Education Program coordinated a youth-run and youth-organized Take Back the Night in Tucson. Take Back the Night rallies have been organized throughout the United States since 1978 to protest sexual and domestic violence. While Tucson has seen many Take Back the Night events, this was the first in Tucson in which teenagers marched through the streets and publicly spoke out against sexual violence.

Tucson Youth Take Back the Night was a collaborative effort between the Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault, and victim services and youth non-profit agencies including: the Brewster Center Domestic Violence Services, KARE Center, Our Family Services, and Open-Inn, Inc. Adult volunteers from these agencies helped provide assistance and guidance to youth organizers from Rincon High School, Project MORE Alternative High School, and the KARE Center. Although adults volunteered to help organize Take Back the Night, this event was entirely youth led. All student organizers received education about sexual violence and had attended Rape Prevention and Education workshops from the Center Against Sexual Assault prior to organizing Take Back The Night.

At Take Back the Night, youth organizers educated the community about the impact of sexual violence on individuals and society. This was done through a series of creative projects, which included theatre, poetry, live music, a candlelight vigil and visual artistic pieces. Students of Project MORE High School marched more than four miles through the streets of Tucson holding posters with rape prevention messages. These students also organized a poetry slam focused on sexual assault.



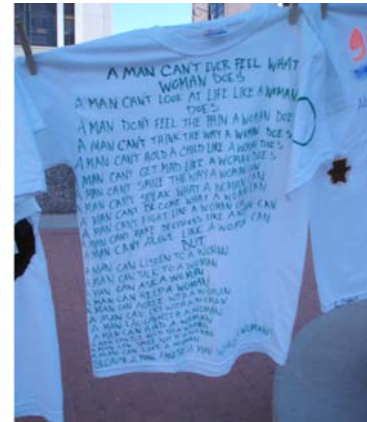
Students from Rincon High School presented a play on drug-facilitated rapes. Their play depicted a party (involving elaborate hip hop dancing) at which a young man attempted to slip a "date rape drug" into a young woman's drink. His peers intervene and prevent him from raping the young woman. Our Family Teen Theatre also presented a performance in which a convicted adolescent rapist takes accountability for the rape he committed and educates other young men about respecting women.



A central piece of Take Back the Night was the Clothesline Project. The Clothesline Project is a visual display about the impact that sexual violence has on primary and secondary victims. Survivors are given the opportunity to decorate t-shirts and express their thoughts and emotions regarding sexual violence. The t-shirts are then hung on a clothesline for the

public to see. More than sixty students decorated t-shirts for the clothesline project. Many of these t-shirts included detailed rape disclosures. Other t-shirts demanded respect for women. Following is a poem that a male high school student wrote on his t-shirt:

A man can't ever feel what a woman does
 A man can't look at life like a woman does
 A man don't feel the pain a woman does
 A man can't think the way a woman does
 A man can't hold a child like a woman does
 A man can't get mad like a woman does
 A man can't smile like a woman can
 A man can't speak what a woman can
 A man can't become what a woman can
 A man can't fight like a woman can
 A man can't make decisions like a woman can
 A man can't argue like a woman can



BUT

A man can listen to a woman
 A man can talk to a woman
 A man can ask a woman
 A man can agree with a woman
 A man can cry with a woman
 A man can laugh with a woman
 A man can hold a woman
 A man can be held by a woman
 A man can smile with a woman
 A man can love a woman
 BECAUSE A MAN CAN'T BE A MAN WIHTOUT A WOMAN



A student from Project MORE High School



Other messages that were written on the t-shirts would make great bumper stickers.

For example...

- “A real man walks a lady home, not stalks a lady home.”
- “Living a good life is the best revenge.”
- “In what language do I have to say no, for you to understand.”
- “Don't wait for me to say NO, wait for me to say YES”

Overall, Tucson Youth Take Back the Night was a great success in our community. About 250 people attended the event; about 90% of them were teens.

Tips for Organizing a Youth Take Back the Night Event in Your Community

- Provide sexual assault awareness and prevention workshops to youth prior to organizing Take Back The Night
- Assign leadership roles to youth
- Encourage youth to use their talents in organizing Take Back the Night. Are the youth passionate about theatre, music, poetry or visual arts?
- Send press releases at least three weeks before the event. Follow up with phone calls and be prepared with background materials and speakers when the press shows up.
- Use creative ways to market the event. For example, youth can market it through their My Space account or text messaging
- Provide sexual assault crisis advocates and referral services at Take Back the Night.
- Collaborate with other non-profits or social service agencies. This might relieve some of the financial stress and lessen your workload.

