

Center offers 24-hour support, encouragement for rape victims

Volunteers are an essential part of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center.

By Dana Jones
THE BATTALION

The large number of women who have experienced the trauma of rape puts volunteers at the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center in high demand, center officials said.

Sherry Hostetter, assistant director of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center, said the center receives 1,500 to 2,000 calls a year, making the need for volunteers great.

Susan, a center volunteer required to remain anonymous, said there are a number of events that a trained volunteer will go through to assist a rape victim.

"When called, the trained volunteer goes to the hospital with the rape victim, where she supports her, answers the woman's questions and gives her a care package containing a change of clothes, tooth brush and tooth paste," Susan said.

Susan said women who have been raped go through a denial stage and try to continue with their daily routines as they did before the incident. Once the woman realizes she cannot go on with life as she did before, she seeks help to deal with the feelings that have overcome her.

involved with the twenty-four hour escort service to the hospital, she said.

Although the center works with women thirteen years and older, eighty to eighty-five percent are sixteen to twenty-four years old, Hostetter said.

Hostetter said the center re-

two weeks of training. During the training time, volunteers hear a variety of speakers to educate them on a number of pertinent topics.

Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department at Texas A&M, was one of the center's three founders in 1983. He was president for three years and is still actively involved with the center. He serves on the Board of Directors and begins the training session for the volunteers.

"I give a lecture that details the profile of a rapist and other sexual offenders," Wiatt said. "We discuss what police do in rape situations, the procedure involved in dealing with the criminal and the follow up for the entire case."

The Department of Human Resources, Brazos Valley Crisis Pregnancy Center and Phoebe's Home, a safe place for battered women and children to reside and get away from abuse, are also represented during the two week training time for volunteers.

The Brazos County Rape Crisis Center's 32nd Training Class for new volunteers will be Jan. 30 through Feb. 9. Those interested in training to become a volunteer can call the center (268-7273) to receive an application and a copy of the training class agenda.

"Our organization cannot function without volunteers. We depend on them so heavily. We operate 24-hours a day, so we could not keep our doors open if it were not for volunteers."

— Sherry Hostetter

Assistant director, Brazos County Rape Crisis Center

The individual support that women who enter the clinic receive is vital to their healing, she said.

"We see people who might not have a lot of support in their life," Susan said.

Because volunteers are not trained professionals, their main job is to support the women by listening, answering the twenty-four hour rape hotline or being

lies heavily on the support the volunteers provide the women.

"Our organization cannot function without volunteers," Hostetter said. "We depend on them so heavily. We operate twenty-four hours a day, so we could not keep our doors open if it were not for volunteers."

Rape Crisis Center volunteers are required to go through

Students now only a telephone call away from trained peer counselors

Students in need of counseling can call the student-run HelpLine.

By Kasie Byers
THE BATTALION

In an effort to give students a service that will listen to their problems in times of crisis, the Student Counseling Services has created a new Student Counseling HelpLine.

The HelpLine, which will begin accepting calls Jan. 27, offers students the chance to talk to other students for help on problems, needed information or referrals.

Dr. Kerry Hope, associate director of Student Counseling Services, said plans for such a HelpLine have been in progress for some time.

"Dr. Wade Berch, Director of Student Counseling Services, and I have been planning this service for many years," Hope said. "Berch had a similar service at East Texas State University when he was the Director of the Counseling Center there and a lot of universities across the nation already have them. We felt the need to provide a listening ear for the students of the Texas A&M campus."

Although initially intended to be open 24 hours, the service's hours will be limited to 7 p.m. to midnight on weekdays and 2 p.m. to midnight on weekends.

"We wanted to make sure that all the service's procedures were worked out," Hope said. "We decided to start with a small group and limited hours."

Training for HelpLine operators began last week and 35 stu-

dents volunteered for the job. The final interviews for the job will take place over the next two weeks. After these interviews, approximately twenty students will be hired as operators, with each having gone through over 40 hours of training.

Operators of the HelpLine were chosen based on their qualifications and certain counseling criteria.

"We have a list of about twenty qualities we hope for the student to possess," Hope said. "The main ones are their ability to convey warmth and caring, to listen without giving advice, to keep personal values out of their interaction with the callers, to have mature judgment and calmness when a crisis occurs and to keep the calls absolutely confidential."

Most students said their main reasons for volunteering for the service were to gain experience for future involvement in human services, to give back to the A&M community and to simply help people.

Susan Vavra, coordinator of the Student Counseling HelpLine, reinforced these students' ideas with her own reasons for accepting the coordinator position.

"I was the associate director of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center and so I was already doing similar work," Vavra said. "However, when I saw this position open up at the University, I saw it as an opportunity to broaden my experience with other issues besides sexual assault."

As coordinator of the HelpLine, Vavra said she takes care of problems that the volunteer operators may run into while working in the service

and oversees the service to ensure that everything runs smoothly. "I'm basically in charge of running the entire HelpLine," Vavra said. "I'm in charge of taking care of any problems that may arise and of setting up training classes for those who wish to volunteer."



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Counseling center expands services

By Betty Milburn
STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES

Students will see many changes in the Student Counseling Services this semester.

Beginning this semester, three new full-time staff members provide counseling services solely in the career and study skills areas of the Student Counseling Service.

Learning Skills Center Workshops

The Learning Skills Center has dramatically expanded services since moving to Henderson Hall. The center's mission is to assist students in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes which enhance their study and test-taking abilities while decreasing anxieties related to academic performance. Approximately two study skills workshops are offered throughout the semester.

Two support groups have also been added. One is a stress management group and the other is a thesis/dissertation support group. A mid-term group is also being added to focus on reducing anxiety and increasing study skills to help participants complete the semester successfully. For more information about this group, contact Marcella Stark at 845-4427 ext. 157 or at e-mail address marcella@scs1.tamu.edu.

Aggie Counseling Experience (ACE)

Students may schedule an appointment with counselors to discuss academic difficulties. ACE Peer Helpers, volunteers trained to help fellow students with study skill concerns, are also available to discuss academic concerns on a drop-in basis.

Learning Skills Center Lab

The Learning Skills Center lab contains self-help resources students may use at their own pace. The lab contains books, computer programs and VHS and cassette tapes on a variety of learning skills topics. The lab also has software preparation programs for the GRE, GMAT and LSAT. No appointment is required to use the self-help materials from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Students may also use lab materials from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday by appointment. For a list of resources available contact Lyle Slack at 845-4427 ext. 209 or e-mail address lyle@scs1.tamu.edu.

Learning Skills Certificate Program

This new program is individualized for each student but contains five consistent elements: a pretest with a learning skills measure, an initial counseling session, a contract of self-paced work to be completed by the end of the semester, an exit interview (post-test is optional) and a certificate verifying completion of the contract. The time required for this program varies between 9 and 17 hours.

Grade Distribution Lists

Another addition to the Learning Skills Center is the computerization of the grade distribution lists. The information includes the percentage of grades given in each section of each class taught at A&M in a particular semester. Currently, this service is in transition from paper to computer format. Until all the bugs are worked out of the new system, students will have a choice of format.

Career Counseling & Testing Center

The biggest change in the Student Counseling Service career area is the new name: Career Counseling & Testing Center. This change was initiated in an effort to better describe the work done with students in the initial stages of career exploration and to limit the confusion between the SCS career services and the Career Center services, which focus primarily on cooperative education and employment.

Interest Inventories

The variety of interest inventories available to students has also expanded. In addition to the Strong Interest Inventory and the Self-Directed Search, the Career Occupational Preference System and the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey are being used. The COPS contains interest, values and abilities measures. The CISS provides information based on students' self-reported interests and skills. Students do not have to schedule an appointment to take an interest inventory, but it is recommended that they at least talk to an ACE Peer Helper to determine which measure might best meet their needs.

SIGI-Plus

Available in the Career Counseling & Testing Center, this is a computerized career guidance program. It provides an assessment of career values, interests and skills and generates a personalized list of career options based on the information.

Career Library

The 500-plus volumes of occupational information available in the Career Counseling & Testing Center have been reorganized to be more "user friendly." In addition to books and handouts, there are a number of videotapes about career planning. These self-help resources are available for students to use at their own pace from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday.

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