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Joanna Katz shares sexual assault experiences *Presents award-winning documentary*

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Joanna Katz was just 19 years old when her life was forever changed. Late one night in June, 1988, Katz was leaving a nightclub with a new friend of hers, Julie. As they stood talking at Julie's car, Katz felt something sticking into her rib. She turned around, thinking it was a friend playing a joke. It was then that she quickly realized it wasn't anyone she knew.

What had been stuck into her rib was a gun.

The man holding the gun ordered Katz into the car, and this sudden encounter marked the beginning of a hellish night that is remarkable for, amongst other things, the fact that Katz lived to talk about it.

Katz has talked about her experiences ever since, culminating in a documentary by filmmaker Liz Oakley, titled *Sentencing the Victim*. Katz came to Guilford on Dec. 2 to visit students during the day, and later that night to show the film and participate in a discussion afterwards.

The film chronicles Katz's in-depth discussion of her assault at the hands of five men that lasted for more than five hours. It then goes on to show the subsequent trial and conviction of the culprits, and Katz's exhaustive ordeal in having to attend five separate parole hearings since 1996. The film shows a woman who is unafraid to tackle her past experiences as well as the



"If I was able to make it happen, the world can't be such a horrible place."

exhaustive process of keeping her attackers in jail.

Katz explained that she was initially reluctant to be the main focus of the documentary.

"I originally wanted to do it about other victims," said Katz. "When I met Liz

Oakley, I talked to her about it and she initially wasn't interested. Then she went to a parole hearing and was completely appalled and agreed to do the film on her own terms."

Those terms turned out to be having Katz as the centerpiece to the film.

The film premiered on PBS as part of the Independent Lens film series in 2002, and became the highest-rated showing in the series' history. Around this time, Katz had been on hiatus from public speaking. Then Guilford alumna Debbie Allen, who works in Victim Education, got a chance to meet Katz, and Katz herself made a point to talk with Allen.

"I met Joanna at a conference and she sought me out," explained Allen. Together, they formulated a plan for Katz to come to Guilford with the help of a grant from the Governor's Crime Commission.

Kathryn Schmidt, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, was instrumental in making Katz's trip possible, and she said that "the students were amazed by her ability to articulate her experience."

Katz made it her duty to speak out about victim's rights and the problems that arise because of judicial hearings of violent crimes and the stigma they carry.

However, Katz is seeing progress.

"Nowadays, victims are more apt to come forward," Katz said, "but when one gets overwhelmed on making decisions on whether an offender should go to the next stage, you should never forget that the victim should never fall secondary."

In the film, there are several scenes in which Katz receives seemingly indifferent treatment at parole hearings. Her lawyer

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Tony Burks wins 'Secondary Principal of the Year' award

Nasi Easton

Staff Writer

He's an ex-"Chief Learner and Dream Maker," a master whistler with a love of stories, winner of two awards, principal of a growing school - and to top it all off, he loves to cook.

That's Tony Burks, the principal of the Early College at Guilford, and recipient of Guilford County's 2005 Secondary Principal of the Year award. This award is the second he has won since he began his career at the Early College in 2002. The first was in 2003, when he received the Joseph B. Whitehead Educator of Distinction Award.

Burks was born in Dothan, Alabama, where he lived for 18 years before going to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated with a degree in philosophy and went on to teach at the University School of Nashville and then Crockett Elementary

School in Brentwood, Tennessee. At Crockett he came up with the title "Chief Learner and Dream Maker" to describe his role as principal.

"The superintendent at the time hated that title," said Burks. "I printed business cards and letterheads with the title because it was about something bigger than him. I thought, no title's going to change how I care for this position."

In 2002, the Early College at Guilford opened, and Burks became the principal. He also serves on the Board of Advisors for the North Carolina New Schools Project, a project to reform schools across North Carolina. The reforms began as an attempt to build more early and middle colleges across the state, but currently addresses issues faced in all public schools - like student-teacher relationships.

"I would never have rushed out and tried to strike up a con-

versation with my school principal," said Burks. "Why would I have wanted to talk to him? But in this day and age, it just makes sense. We have a responsibility as educators to help kids know who and what they are."

That's one of the Early College's defining characteristics, and something that Burks strongly supports - the relationship between students and teachers. Burks encourages every one of the 180 Early College students to come talk to him if they have any problems or need any advice. The same goes for all faculty of the school. Burks even gives students his cell phone number in case they need to reach him.

"For a number of kids, it takes them a while to really believe it. I say for every kid who arrives, it takes a semester, if not a year, before they say 'Okay, he says if I'm having problems I can call,' because you have to be comfort-

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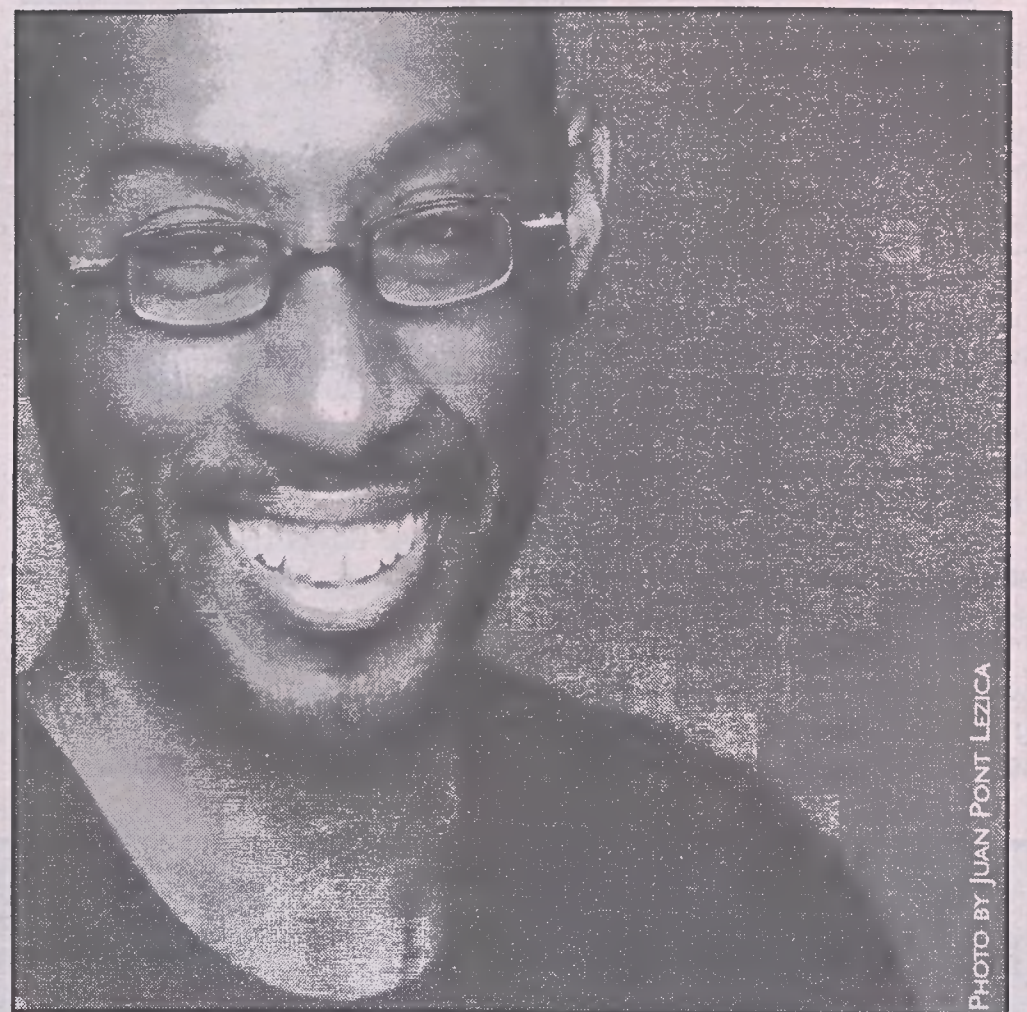


PHOTO BY JUAN PONT LEZICA

"We have a responsibility ... to help kids know who ... they are."