

THE GUILFORDIAN

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Sexual assault victims criticize judicial system

NEWS

BY TY GOOCH
STAFF WRITER

Is Guilford's judicial system discouraging victims of sexual misconduct from pressing charges? According to sophomore Cara Messina, they are — and she has the firsthand experience to prove it.

At Guilford Pride's Drag Ball on April 27, 2013, Messina, along with another student, was groped by a student who was a senior at the time.

"He was very drunk," said Messina. "He approached us and asked us if we wanted to get wasted."

After declining his invitation, the girls were followed around by the alleged offender as they cleaned up from the night's activities.

"He wouldn't leave us alone," said Messina. "He repeatedly touched me, and after asking him to stop he apologized and walked away."

But then he came back.

"He touched me in inappropriate places," said Messina. "After that, he followed my friend into the girl's bathroom and I called Public Safety."

The next day, the girls put matters into the hands of the judicial process. But according to Messina they were dissuaded from pressing charges.

"There was the option, but it was not encouraged," said

Messina. "There was no eagerness to punish him for his actions."

The offender wrote an apology letter and offered to meet the girls in person to give a more personal apology. The girls declined his offer.

They were told he felt really bad and that the apology letter should be enough.

The alleged offender's graduation status was also brought up in the conversation. He was set to graduate in a few weeks, and if found guilty of the charges, would have likely been suspended.

"(We were told), 'Don't press charges; we wouldn't want to ruin his chances for graduation,'" said Messina. "There was a strong sense for us to be compliant."

With all the pressure from the administration, Messina ultimately decided not to press charges. The offender was, however, sanctioned with sexual misconduct.

The administration was unable to comment on the issue due to privacy laws.

Janet MacDonald '13 also felt let down by the judicial system when she reported an incident last March.

After engaging in sexual acts with two Guilford students one night in a state where she was unable to give consent, MacDonald wanted to press charges.

"I wanted to let guys know that they couldn't just take

SEE **SEXUAL ASSAULT** | PAGE 2

Only YES
Keep It Consensual
Means Yes

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WEB-
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brutality

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NEWS | OPINIONS ON THE FOUNTAIN | PAGE 3
W&N | AQUIFER DISCOVERED IN KENYA | PAGE 6
FEATURES | AL-AQSA HEALTH CLINIC | PAGE 7
OPINION | LETTER TO THE EDITOR | PAGE 10