

Campus police looking to combat stalking

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The UNCW Police Department is distributing to students a just-published 12-page booklet about stalking.

"This is a big issue," said Police Lieutenant Mitch Cook, one of the writers of the brochure.

"Stalking is serious, often violent and can escalate over time," the booklet reads. The booklet, with an initial printing of 500 copies, describes stalking as a series of actions (by another person) that make you feel afraid or in danger. It states that stalking can be a variety of ways in which a person is harassed, threatened, followed, watched or persistently telephoned by another.

"Stalking can grow and become violent," Lt. Cook said. "And it can be a crime. It is covered under North Carolina Statute 14-277.3. A violation of this section is a Class A1 misdemeanor. But if there is a court order in effect prohibiting similar behavior by that person, that person is guilty of a Class H felony," he said.

UNCW Police are currently investigating some student complaints on stalking. "We have cases we're looking into to learn if they meet the criminal level," Cook said.

The 2003 UNCW Police Report, released Sept. 30, 2004 lists three forcible sex offenses, up from two in 2002. Cook said it was not immediately known if stalking or domestic violence was involved in those offenses.

"These types of sexual assault are usually crimes of opportunity, where the assailant found the victim intoxicated and took advantage of them," said Cook.

Last spring, two UNCW female students were murdered by male students with whom they were acquainted. Cook said that statistics show that 49 percent of victims of violent

crime know their assailants.

On May 5 Jessica Lee Faulkner, 18, was found strangled to death in her room in Cornerstone Hall. Fellow student Curtis Timothy Dixon, who lived a few doors down, is charged with the murder. The 21-year-old Dixon has been charged with 1st degree murder, rape, sexual offense and kidnapping. He is in the New Hanover County jail awaiting trial.

On June 4 Christen Naujoks, 22, was gunned down by another student at her North Chase apartment. John Peck, 27, a former boyfriend, died three days later of a self-inflicted gun shot wound, during a police chase. On April 26 Naujoks had filed a complaint with police seeking a protective order against Peck. It stated he had threatened her with a gun.

"If you feel you are being stalked, trust your intuition and get help," Cook said.

For help, Cook recommends students contact the UNCW Police Department, the Dean of Students, Housing and Residence Life, Client Services or the Counseling Center.

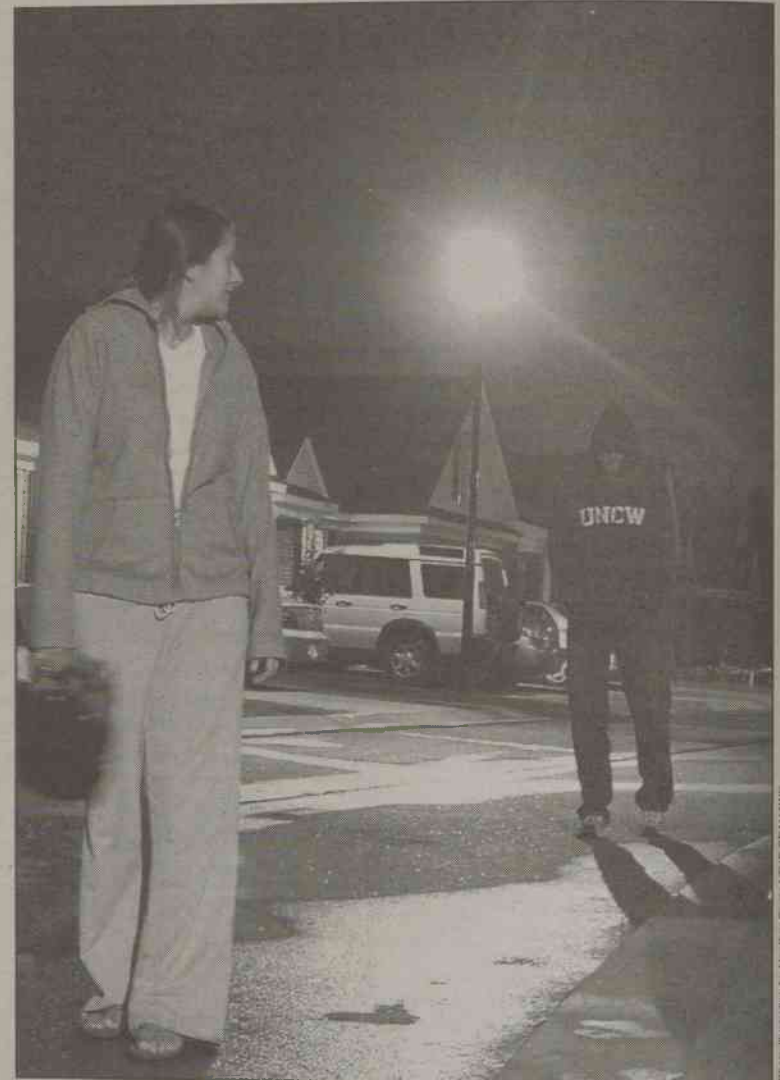
Counselor Dee Casey said that the center does get student complaints about stalking. "We currently have less than a handful."

Casey said the majority of problems students come to talk about revolve around relationships.

"They can be romantic, family, roommate, or teacher relationship problems," she said. "And they could involve stalking."

Casey, who has been a counselor at UNCW since 1988, said she doesn't feel stalking and domestic violence are on the rise.

"These issues have always been occurring. They're just coming to light more often. I don't believe they're just suddenly going on. We urge any student with any problem to come and talk to a counselor," Casey said. "We're here to help."



Lieutenant Mitch Cook of the UNCW Police recently published a booklet informing students of the dangers involved with stalkers. He recommends that students who believe they are being stalked contact a university official immediately to avoid the possible escalation of activity to the criminal level.

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