



## St. Andrews Women's Issues Club hosts Candlelight Vigil

St. Andrews Women's Issues Club hosted a Candlelight vigil on April 18 to help raise awareness of sexual assault crimes. The following is a speech presented by Sherry Hamby, Professor Al Bardi's wife.

It is great to see everyone here tonight. Tonight can be the first of many steps to provide much needed action in the St. Andrews community. Not just awareness, but action. There probably are not any rapists here tonight. So we all may think we are doing our part to prevent sexual assault. But what I want to emphasize tonight is that it is not enough to simply refrain from being a rapist. It is not enough to simply refrain from illegally touching someone else in ways that they do not want, even if you stop short of rape. It is not even enough to succeed in avoiding becoming the victim of sexual assault. All of us here are also witnesses, witness almost every day to events that increase the risk of rape. America has the highest incidence of sexual violence among all the wealthy, industrialized nations such as the countries of Europe, Japan, and Canada. Why is this so? Tonight I will briefly describe 4 reasons why this is so and 5 first steps each of us can take to change a culture of rape to a culture of respect.

**Problem #1** The selling of sex, violence, and sexual violence is a multibillion dollar industry. It's well documented, despite what some may try to tell you, that even brief exposure to pornography and violence increases sexual aggression. But it's not just hard core porn that is the problem. Mainstream media are full of movies and music that degrade women and brag about sexual violence. **Problem #2** Second there is the conspiracy of silence. Acts of violence happen and the perpetrators get away with it because no one ever finds out about it. You can bet that the perpetrators are counting on the shame and embarrassment of victims to keep their mouths shut. They know victims don't want to be stigmatized. Did you ever stop to wonder why it is so much more stigmatizing to be a victim of a rape than the victim of a mugging or another crime? The whole system of stigmatizing sexual assault victims was created to keep victims quiet. **Problem #3** The third problem is that perpetrators get away with rape even when everybody knows about it. Even in the



St. Andrews community members and Laurinburg community members join together to help raise awareness of sexual assault. Picture courtesy of Communications.

years that I have been at St. Andrews I have heard stories about individual males and sometimes even whole cohorts of buddies or sports teams that are known for their aggressive sexual behavior, but although everyone "knows," no consequences happen. I've heard stories about men literally lying in wait for new freshman women because they know they are the only ones who don't know their reputation. Even if the police don't do anything, these men should be expelled and ostracized but instead they continue with their scholarships and their classes and only the victims suffer.

**Problem #4** Then there's the social pressure on women to be attractive and get in a relationship. I've known women who thought it was "cute" when a student caught the attentions of a known rapist because they just thought any attention from any guy

is good attention. Needless to say, it's not, but it shows you how women are still swamped with the message that they are no one without a man. So those are 4 problems: the selling of sexual violence, the conspiracy of silence, the lack of consequences for known offenders, and the stigmatization of the single woman.

Now here are 5 very specific things you can do about those problems. It's hard to stand up to a culture of violence but these are some of the simplest steps you can take to start pulling away from it.

**Action 1)** Don't consume media that degrades women and glorifies violence. I know there probably aren't a lot of subscribers to *Hustler* in this audience, but I encourage you to critically appraise ALL media, not just the blatantly pornographic. You don't have to limit yourselves to

nonstop viewings of *March of the Penguins*. Go see *Blades of Glory* and skip *Grindhouse*. Don't buy those t-shirts that "solve" "problems" by duct-taping a woman's mouth, and don't laugh at them when others wear them. It will make a difference. In fact, this has been a good week for shaping the media—Don Imus, who for more than a decade has received tremendous financial backing and a national platform to spread sexist and racist slurs, finally picked on the wrong women and got his long overdue comeuppance. Your voice can make a difference.

**Action 2)** Persuade the school to offer violence prevention programs. On most campuses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these are offered at a minimum to all freshmen and required of all athletes. Although these programs are not a cure, they do make a dent in the problem.

**Action 3)** Fix this sign and work to get emergency call boxes throughout campus. "Just in case you don't feel safe walking alone" makes it sound like walking alone at night is something some women can safely choose to do unless they are scaredy-cats. Women can never walk alone safely at night. It is not a personal choice; it is

a fact of our violent culture. Campus Escorts should be in place every night of the week. Student volunteers, as long as they work in pairs and carry flashlights and cell phones, can help provide this service, as they do on many campuses.

**Action 4)** Create safe places to speak out. It's too easy for the naysayers to claim it is not a problem here if no one ever reports it. St. Andrews has not reported an act of sexual assault in the last 3 years on this campus in their official filings of crime statistics.

**Action 5)** Don't participate in the stigmatization of single women. Finding a partner is important, but there are other things in life too. The next time your roommate frets about not having a boyfriend, you tell her she is just fine the way she is.

Thank you and have a safe night.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Betsy Dendy via email.

### Dean's Note:

The tragic events at Virginia Tech serve to remind us of the fragility of life. For some of you the horror that unfolded on the VT campus is very personal; several of our faculty and staff members graduated from VT, our equestrian teams regularly compete against Virginia Tech riders and some of you have friends who attend that very fine institution. I urge you to remember the victims, families, students, faculty, staff and administrators in your thoughts and prayers.

In light of the crisis at Virginia Tech, let me remind the St. Andrews community of the precautions you must take to keep this campus safe. Please remember that campus safety is everyone's responsibility.

**Report all suspicious activity.** If you see a suspicious person, vehicle or activity, call campus safety.

**Guns, knives, incendiary devices are not allowed on campus.** It is a felony to possess these items on a college campus. You can prevent a horrible event by immediately reporting the possession of these items.

**Keep your doors and windows locked.** The best protection for you and your possessions is locking your door and windows. Leaving a door propped open jeopardizes the safety of you and your suite mates.

**Report all expressions of violence or threats.** If you notice a change in behavior or hear someone make

threats, call campus safety

**Be responsible for your guests** Explain to your guests expectations for visiting campus and your guest is registered with campus safety. St. Andrews has an emergency management plan that is activated in case of an emergency. Administrators, members of OSA, campus safety officers and others review and assess the plan on an ongoing basis.

Students, faculty and staff will be notified by a telephone broadcast, emails and postings when the emergency plan is activated. The notices will describe the nature of the emergency and give instructions for dealing with the situation. In the event of a campus wide lock-down, members of the administration, student life, campus safety and physical plant will be dispatched to secure all buildings.

Campus safety has direct radio communication with Scotland County Emergency Services and the 911 communications center. City police, county sheriff, emergency medical services will be notified of a campus emergency through the communications center. These agencies respond to emergency calls to campus within minutes.

During an emergency, it is critical to follow instructions and repeat only confirmed and official information.

We hope that the type of event that took place at VT never happens here. Please keep those affected by the VT tragedy in your prayers.

- Dean Glenn Batten

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