

Orgasm Day appreciated by all comers

BY LAURA FRIED
STAFF WRITER

A banner reading "Hey Come Over Here (no pun intended)" welcomed students passing through Polk Place to Orgasm Awareness Day events.

Alongside the curious glances and shy giggles from passers-by, students could learn that it takes 116 muscles to climax and that using a vibrator to treat women for hysteria was a common medical practice until the 1950s.

The event, co-sponsored by Choice USA and Feminist Students United, was meant to be educational as well as entertaining.

Anna Potter, a member of the Choice executive board, said the group's members hoped the day's events would enlighten women about their bodies.

"We want to empower women," Potter said. "Without control over our sexual lives we don't have control over our reproductive lives."

An estimated 100 to 150 people stopped by the event, including a surprising number of males, event organizers said.

The festivities included games such as a race to see which participant could correctly put a condom on a banana the fastest.

The event also presented a sex toy museum featuring a vintage vibrator from 1924, a table of fun facts about orgasms and a raffle for a free vibrator.

Choice members also provided students with information about sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives and safe sex.

Although the event was full of fun and games, the day had a serious message.

"We want to provide a laid-back and comfortable environment where women can come to learn about their sexuality," said Jennifer Monroe, a Choice executive board member.

Allowing women to become

comfortable with their sexuality was another important goal the group had for Orgasm Awareness Day, Monroe said.

"Female sexuality is often seen as taboo or shameful," she said. "We want to show women it's natural and healthy to explore their sexuality."

But group members said they were surprised when they received several negative e-mails prior to the event from men who do not attend UNC, some of whom live outside North Carolina.

"The response from those men is a perfect example of why we're doing this," Potter said.

Group members said they were happy they did not receive any opposition or negativity during the day.

Students who attended the event said it was important for women, whether or not they're sexually active, to be educated about sex.

"Movies always show sex, but they never show how to practice safe sex," said Harriet Ashcroft, a fresh-

man from New York. "It's important to teach women about safe sex since we'll all be exposed to it."

Judit Albert, a junior from Pennsylvania, said she was surprised that female sexuality is viewed as taboo or offensive to some people in the U.S. because the country portrays itself as a country of freedom.

"People should not be afraid to talk about sex education," she said.

"To say the word 'vagina,' have pictures of vaginas and see that they're not monsters is important."

Because of the success of the day, Monroe said she hopes there will be another Orgasm Awareness Day in the future.

"We can't change everybody, but even if we get some people thinking about it and spread the information to their friends, we can get the ball rolling," Monroe said.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.



DTH/BETH ELY
Junior Jennifer Monroe of UNC's Choice USA shows freshman Harriet Ashcroft how to put on a condom correctly at Polk Place on Thursday.

Crisis center in funding quagmire

After 30 years, looking to expand

BY NICKI JHABVALA
STAFF WRITER

It's been more than 30 years since its opening, but the Orange County Rape Crisis Center still faces the same obstacle.

The nonprofit volunteer center that provides support and education about sexual violence to the community struggled to get off the ground due to a lack of funding.

Today, as the center seeks to expand and serve more clients, the financial problem persists.

"We're in a situation where we need to grow and need to increase our services and the number of people we reach in the community," said Margaret Barrett, the organization's executive director.

The crisis center relies heavily on government funds, grants and contributions from United Way, as they provide nearly half of its financial support.

In an attempt to increase the amount it receives from private companies and individuals, the crisis center is holding its Annual Holiday Auction at 5:30 p.m. Sunday at the Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel.

"We have a lot of community support because people realize that (sexual violence) is an important issue," said Cutler Andrews, the center's event coordinator.

"But funding is a reality for all nonprofit organizations. There is so much of a need, and we've got to find a way to keep our doors open."

The event will include a silent auction of items ranging from gift certificates to artwork, a live auction, a musical appearance by the band Equinox and a variety of refreshments.

"This is a chance for people to contribute to our mission while participating in an event that allows them to bid on items and buy holiday gifts," Barrett said.

The crisis center also will have a raffle, with a prize of two nights in New York City's Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

"This is a great way for students and other members who can't attend the event to contribute by just buying a raffle ticket," Barrett said.

As the 18th holiday auction the center has held, event organizers said this year they hope to bring in \$53,000 — an increase from the \$46,000 raised at last year's event.

Though the crisis center is not in the same funding predicament as it was in 1974, the organization always is looking for additional revenue for its general expenses of services, such as its 24-hour crisis response line and community education programs, officials said.

Andrews said the program serves almost 400 clients a year for sexual assault support and reaches more than 10,000 people through its education programs in the local schools.

"It is important that (the auction) is a success because it helps us to serve the community," he said.

"It's a vital event for us, in that it brings in a lot of needed funds, and it's also a fun event for people to come to because we have such a wide selection of things to choose from."

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