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Annual conference educates UMaine audience on rape

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• Rape Awareness Committee

Annual conference educates UMaine audience on rape

By Elizabeth Beaulieu
Maine Campus staff

Students gathered early Saturday morning for the Rape and Sexual Assault Awareness Conference to learn about and discuss rape and sexual assault.

"Students need to learn about the resources available for themselves and their friends," said Donna Seppy, chairwoman of the subcommittee responsible for the conference.

The conference was sponsored by the University of Maine Rape Awareness Committee and has taken place every spring for 14 years. Participants in the conference were given pencils and T-shirts with the slogan "Rape Shatters Lives, Help Pick Up the Pieces" and whistles.

In the keynote address, Tim Marchell recounted his experience as a student and fraternity member at Cornell University.

"Most men who rape on college campuses are pretty regular guys, guys I used to live with," said Marchell, an intern at the Counseling Center and a doctoral student from the California

School of Professional Psychology. "Rape is a learned phenomenon. Men learn it is okay to be violent and aggressive with women and exert power and control over them."

Marchell said men's beliefs and attitudes need to be changed, not the actions or appearances of women.

"Any human being has the right to say 'no' at any time and be respected," Marchell said. "Bad judgment and teasing are not rapable offenses."

It is important to recognize that rape hurts and affects men and women, Marchell said.

"Rape casts a shadow over the relationship between men and women; it affects us all," Marchell said. "We need to begin by challenging ourselves and continue by challenging others."

Skits performed at the conference demonstrated ways rape can happen to people and how rape can be dealt with.

Throughout the skits the audience was told to listen to victims, reassure them that it is not their fault and present them with their options



Karen Grotton speaks about safety precautions as part of the rape conference held on Saturday. (Stef Bailey Photo.)

without pressuring them.

Mike Roberts, the deputy district attorney for Penobscot and Piscataquis counties, ad-

ressed the legal concerns and aspects of rape

See RAPE on page 5

Rape

and sexual assault.

Roberts said that sexual assault can be any touching that is offensive to other people; it does not require penetration.

Roberts also described the trial process for sexual assault or rape and the effects it can have on both the victim and the person accused of rape.

Karen Grotton, a self-defense instructor for Rape Aggression Defense, talked about safety precautions.

"You don't have to be a victim of any crime if you protect yourself," Grotton said. "Develop your options, whether it be self-defense or running. The key is options."

Grotton also talked about rohypnol, a sedative often added to punch and other drinks at parties or bars.

"There is always going to be a drug out there and people stooping to such disgusting levels," Grotton said. "You have to control your environment."

Becoming more educated about sexual assault was the goal and result of the conference.

"Concerning sexual assault, many may not be aware that their actions may be offensive," said Erica Cote, a resident assistant in Somerset Hall. "The people who attended will now be more aware."

from page 3