On May 6th, the Gainesville Commission on the Status of Women hosted the 33rd annual Sexual Battery Conference at Trinity United Methodist Church. The conference provides a forum to generate discussion about sexual violence prevention and intervention methods within the broader community. The 130 attendees were a comprehensive representation from organizations and agencies in Gainesville that mainly work with survivors of crime, such as advocates, victim services, police department, Sheriff’s Office, state attorney’s officers, social workers, and DCF employees.

Chair of the GCOSW, Debra Weiss, formally opened the conference with a warm welcome to all. The morning started off with guest speaker Debra Holbrook, who has extensive knowledge and experience in working and coordinating the care of survivors of sexual assault and interpersonal violence. Holbrook gave an enlightening presentation about the scientific innovation and trend of the use of Alternative Light Source (ALS) in forensic medical investigations, specifically in reference to strangulation. She has been instrumental in pioneering the use of the alternative light source as a tool for the investigation of strangulation given that it is able to highlight bruising that is not visible to the human eye.

After the presentation, the audience dispersed to join one of four workshops: Strangulation & Use of ALS; Witness Intimidation; Compassion Fatigue; and Sexual Violence in the Trans-Community. OVS attended the trans-community workshop, presented by Shanti Cruz. Cruz shared research data which reflected that over half of the trans-community experience sexual violence. This workshop also highlighted the challenges that members of the trans-community encounter when dealing with services in the aftermath of a domestic violence incident. (continued on page 4)
On April 3, 2014, several University of Florida groups participated in the annual “Take Back the Night: A March and Rally to End Sexual Violence” at the Plaza of the Americas.

The event kicked off with remarks and poster-making. At 6 p.m., participants marched on campus, meeting again at the Plaza of the Americas for an open microphone rally that began at 7 p.m.

The event was part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month and was presented by STRIVE at GatorWell, Office of Victim Services, LGBT Affairs, and Alachua County Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center.

Alexa Rollins ’16, a peer advocate, was one of the program participants who bravely shared her story. “Take Back the Night is an inspiring, eye-opening event not just for survivors, but also for bystanders who listen to the stories. Survivors are able to tell their moving stories (for some the first time they are doing so), let go of many emotions, and receive a bit of peace once they are finished. They finally are able to visibly see the support for them. Bystanders also are exposed to the issues surrounding sexual battery and assault. Even in today’s society, sexual assault is a taboo topic that people barely talk about. This event, though, sparks a conversation because people hear first-hand accounts and cannot deny that it is a prevalent horror in our society. This event inspires action against, prevention of, and education about sexual assault.”

For more than 30 years, universities have gathered for “Take Back the Night” events that support and empower survivors, raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence, and give voice to their desire to end sexual violence so that no one needs to live in fear.

Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coordinator Rita Lawrence said, “UF has a long history of holding “Take Back the Night Events” to end sexual violence, and next year we hope to see even more of the UF community turn out to learn how to support survivors and build a respectful, caring community. Everyone has a role to play if we truly want sexual violence to end.”

(continued on page 3)
Research shows that one in four college females and one in 20 males will be the victim of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault during their college years. At least 80 percent of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim. These statistics only serve to highlight the importance of campuses and communities continuing to come together to raise awareness about this serious issue. Through this event, every member of our campus community can be empowered to take responsibility for speaking out against and for helping prevent sexual violence.

UFPD Peer Advocates & Internship Program: Join Our Team!

The University of Florida Police Department’s Office of Victim Services offers a Peer Advocacy Program and internship opportunities. The trained peer advocate team is responsible for creating and delivering innovative presentations on sexual battery, intimate partner violence, stalking, alcohol and consent, and other various topics to classes and different student organizations. The peer advocates also develop and coordinate a wide variety of campus and community awareness/outreach events.

Additionally, trained UFPD OVS Interns can work directly with UFPD OVS clients to provide crisis intervention and ongoing support. Interns are required to be trained in crisis intervention prior to beginning their internship.

Kayla Ventura, class of 2015 and a current peer advocate, has this to say about the program: “Our outreach events are really eye-opening because we see that a ton of UF students are interested in opening up about taboo topics like consent, rape, violence, and stalking. A lot of people I’ve never met before come up to me at tabling events to share their stories, get resources, or get educated about how to raise awareness and prevent these things. It’s really inspiring and fun to work with such a tight-knit, like-minded group of students.”

If you have any questions about becoming a peer advocate or an intern, or would like to know more about upcoming presentations or events that the advocates are hosting, please contact the Office of Victim Services at (352) 392-5648.
Report Rape Gainesville

In November 2013, Gainesville Police Department (GPD) and the Alachua County Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center launched www.reportrapegainesville.org. This website enables individuals to anonymously report sexual assaults and provides information, options, and resources for survivors of sexual violence.

The primary goals of www.reportrapegainesville.org are to assist GPD with catching offenders and to provide a confidential place where victims can seek help.

GPD Captain Lynne Benck, the commander of the Criminal Investigations Bureau, reported to News 4 Jacksonville that websites such as these are being used mainly in cities around the country. “Gainesville needs this resource because we know only a fraction of sexual assault victims are making reports to police. We are not going to try to learn the identity of anyone who makes a report; we plan to respect their choice. Our hope is to give victims and their loved ones an idea of what their options actually are and an avenue by which they can record the information and begin healing,” Benck said.

Law enforcement officials estimate that less than 20 percent of rapes get reported in Alachua County. The hope is that www.reportrapegainesville.org will encourage more survivors to seek help.

During the day’s luncheon, the Gainesville Commission on the Status of Women presented the Conference’s annual Martha V. Varnes Award that recognizes outstanding achievement in the field of violence against women. This year’s recipients were Teresa Drake from The Source Program and Detective Drew Moore from Alachua County Sheriff’s Office. The award is titled in honor of retired Lt. Col. Martha V. Varnes who started her career at UPD as a clerk in 1952. Lt. Col Varnes went on to become very instrumental in developing crime prevention programs at UPD and was a leading figure in changing the perception of law enforcement and the community towards survivors of sexual crime.

The after-lunch keynote speaker was Brad Dennis, from the Polly Klaas Foundation, who spoke about the growing scourge of Human Trafficking which he aptly equated to modern-day slavery. Dennis concluded his presentation with a personal story that conveyed the message that from victimization there can be victory through being an advocate, campaigner, and healer for victims of sexual crimes.

Afternoon break-out workshops were about the commercial sexual exploitation of children, the re-unification of child victims and their sexual offenders, keeping victims engaged in the justice process, and the epidemic of sexual violence on college campuses. OVS attended the workshop regarding sexual violence, which was co-presented by Dean of Student Office & STRIVE at Gator Well. The session brought participants up to speed on Title IX issues and Bystander Education, respectively.

“We wanted attendees to walk out of this conference feeling good about what they do and be motivated to do more,” Weiss said.

If you’re interested in attending the 2014 Sexual Battery Conference, please email an OVS advocate at jvaida@ufl.edu or nphineas@ufl.edu and you will be added to the conference updates listserv.
Our fall 2014 edition of the UFPD Victim Advocate newsletter will feature an in-depth examination of “Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force Report to Protect Students from Sexual Assault.” Since information is power, here are some eye-opening statistics to ponder in the meantime.

1. According to a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, one out of five female college students have been sexually assaulted, and just 13% of survivors of forced sexual assault report the attacks.
2. Most often, students are sexually assaulted by someone they know such as an acquaintance, a classmate, an ex-partner, or friend.
3. The National Institute of Justice reports that 6.1% of males were victims of completed or attempted assault during college.
4. RAINN (Rape Abuse & Incest National Network), the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, recently cited evidence that over 90% of college rapes are committed by just 3% of college men, each raping multiple victims.
5. Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 is legislation prohibiting sexual discrimination based on sex/gender in a federally funded educational setting.
6. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and sexual violence are all forms of sexual discrimination.
7. An educational setting has a duty to protect all students from sexual violence and sexual discrimination regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, and immigration status.
8. Campus sexual assault is underreported for various reasons, which include, but are not limited to, survivors blaming themselves, survivors knowing the perpetrator, and survivors fearing reprisals from the perpetrator and/or their associates.
9. The White House recommends that all universities and colleges conduct a campus climate survey in 2015 to gauge attitudes towards sexual conduct, obstacles to reporting, etc.
10. You can anonymously report a sexual assault incident and rape on Gainesville Police Department’s website called reportrapegainesville.org.

For more information about services and resources with regards to sexual violence, visit the following websites:

- http://www.police.ufl.edu/victim-services/
- http://www.police.ufl.edu/
- http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/
- http://www.rainn.org/
- http://nomore.org/
The Office of Victim Services (OVS) assists all victims of crime including, but not limited to, sexual assault, battery, intimate partner violence, stalking, and/or harassment. Services provided by OVS include:

- Crisis intervention
- Accompanying victims to criminal justice/Student Conduct proceedings
- Obtaining financial reimbursement for losses or expenses incurred as a result of victimization
- Filing for Injunction for Protection Orders (Restraining Orders)
- Advocating for students with professors if special accommodations are necessary

The role of the victim advocate is to inform victims of crime on what options are available and to support and assist them in whatever option they choose. Victims can feel comfortable knowing that anything discussed with the victim advocate will be kept completely confidential, allowing them to explore all of their options in a safe, non-judgmental environment. These services are all free and available on a 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week basis.

Additionally, the Office of Victim Services is available to make presentations on campus on a variety of different topics including victim advocacy, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking/harassment, child abuse, and workplace violence.

For more information on the services provided by OVS, please call (352) 392-5648 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. or (352) 392-1111 after hours and on weekends.

Office of Victim Services
University of Florida Police Department
PO Box 112150
Gainesville, FL 32611-2150
www.police.ufl.edu
352-392-1111 (Emergency)