

GHS seniors learn about sexual assault, reducing risk

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 08 May 2014 14:18 -



The statistics are sobering.

One in four college women will be victims of attempted or completed rapes.

That is why Melanie Gomez, director of the Parent-Child Center of Dawson and Gosper counties, was invited to talk to Gothenburg High School female seniors last Wednesday.

Because many seniors will soon be independent when they leave for college, the military, or jobs or other things, GHS guidance counselor Jerry Wiggins said such information is important.

“They will be going to environments with which they have no familiarity,” Wiggins said.

During her presentation, Gomez showed a film about date rape in which two college girls, who attend a party where alcohol and other drugs are served, are raped.

Sexual assault is attempted on a third female.

After the film, Gomez also shared statistics:

One in four college students will be sexually assaulted.

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An estimated 80% to 90% of female rape victims know the perpetrator.

Females in the 15- to 24-year-old age range are most likely to be sexually assaulted which often happens during the first six weeks on campus.

Every two minutes, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.

Because rape is often difficult to prove and because victims feel so ashamed afterwards, 58% of rapes are not reported to police.

Gomez said it's never the fault of the victim if she or he is sexually assaulted.

"Rape is a violent display of power and it is a crime," she said, noting that the more one can be done to protect herself, the better.

Unfortunately, Gomez said society, in general, often blames the victim when sexual assault occurs.

"And victims don't challenge that because they think people won't believe them," she said.



GOMEZ

To help prevent sexual assault, Gomez said to be aware of controlling behavior in relationships and taking self-defense classes.

"Anything you can do to protect yourself, the better," she said.

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One safeguard Wiggins suggested is for women to travel in pairs or groups and be responsible to each other in getting home safely.

If sexually assaulted, Gomez told the seniors to go to a hospital emergency room or call 911.

Victims should not try to clean themselves or change their clothes since evidence of bodily fluid is important.

“It’s important to report rape because the person will do it again,” she said. “It’s about power and control and it’s not a one-time thing.”

Most college towns have rape/crisis centers.

Wiggins said college students should become familiar with their campus health centers and all of the services they provide.

Victims of sexual assault in the Dawson/Gosper County area are taken to a Family Advocacy Network (FAN) in Kearney where everything that is needed—examination, interview, counseling and other services—are offered, Gomez said.

Husbands and boyfriends can be sexual abusers which is a crime that is not reported because the couple is in a relationship, she said.

“No one ever deserves to be raped,” Gomez said. “Don’t minimize or disregard the experience.”

She noted that sexual assault is usually not perpetrated by a stranger, adding that one victim

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she knows was raped by a family friend for several years.

“It’s a very traumatizing experience. That’s why we need to speak about it,” Gomez said.

She added that alcohol is the number one date rape drug.

Other drugs Gomez mentioned, that can be slipped into drinks, are Ecstasy and Special K (ketamine) that can sedate and incapacitate victims.

Gomez said she’s presented the date-rape talk to a couple of schools in Dawson and Gosper counties, noting that officials at one school said sexual assault didn’t happen there.

“If you think it doesn’t happen, it does,” Wiggins said.

For more information about rape or other services offered at the Parent-Child Center, call 308-324-2336 or visit the website at www.dawsoncountyne.net/pcc.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636