

The CONNSACS Connection

- Connecticut's Leading Voice to End Sexual Violence - Summer 2010 -

Gail Burns-Smith "Dare to Dream" Scholarship Benefit a Success

Gail Burns-Smith came to Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services in 1982 and served as the organization's Executive Director until 2004. In the years since then, she has not been forgotten nor has her impact diminished. Since her passing in September of 2009, CONNSACS and other anti-sexual violence organizations throughout the country have remembered her contributions to the movement and celebrated the rights, resources, and services that victims now have due to her hard work.

The Gail Burns-Smith "Dare to Dream" Fund was created to honor Gail's tireless efforts to advocate on behalf of sexual assault victims. When she retired from CONNSACS, Gail did not want a lot of fanfare, and this scholarship was the commemoration she most desired. Nothing meant more to her than to inspire and support the individuals whose study and/or work was in the field of sexual violence. This stipend is granted yearly to an individual who exemplifies Gail's degree of commitment and dedication.

On Sunday July 11th, 2010, Gail's family, friends, and supporters gathered at Shea's American Bar and Grill in Manchester for an afternoon of live music, food, and remembrance. The event honored Gail and her work, and proceeds benefited the Gail Burns-Smith "Dare to Dream" Fund. Guests at the event were able to enjoy the musical talents of many local bands and singers, including some of Gail's own family. The event raised over three thousand dollars for the "Dare to Dream" Fund and gave Gail's family and friends an opportunity to celebrate the life of an amazing and influential woman.

CONNSACS would like to thank Gail's family and everyone who worked to make this event a success. Applications for the 2011 "Dare to Dream" Scholarship will be available in late 2010.



A band performs at the Gail Burns-Smith Benefit event on July 11.

In this Connection

- Gail Burns-Smith Scholarship Benefit
- Sexting
- College Consortium Against Sexual Assault
- Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program
- In the News

The **CONNSACS Connection** is a quarterly publication of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, the statewide coalition of Connecticut's nine sexual assault crisis services programs. CONNSACS works to end sexual violence through victim assistance, community education, and public policy advocacy. Learn more about us at: www.connsacs.org



Sexting

Sexting, a trend that involves sending nude or semi-nude photos from one cell phone to another, first became a national news story in 2008. That summer, an Ohio teen

committed suicide after being bullied and taunted when an ex-boyfriend circulated nude images that she had sent him via cell phone. In 2009, a similar tragedy involving a 13-year-old Florida girl again made headlines. That same year, six Pennsylvania teens were charged with disseminating and possessing child pornography when three teen girls, ages 14 and 15, sent nude images to three male acquaintances, ages 16 and 17. As schools and parents have grappled with the appropriate response to sexting and how to educate teens about its possible social, emotional, and legal consequences, lawmakers around the country have been trying to craft legislation that acknowledges the seriousness of the issue without equating bad decisions to child pornography.

Some media outlets have described teen sexting as a dangerous epidemic. Others have downplayed its prevalence or dismissed it as harmless. Research into the number of teens who sext has been relatively inconclusive.

College Consortium Against Sexual Assault

The US Department of Justice estimates that nearly one in five college women will experience rape or attempted rape before she graduates. A 2010 investigation by The Center for Public Integrity found that in addition experiencing high rates of sexual violence, many college victims must also contend with campus policies that discourage reporting and fail to hold alleged assailants accountable.

The College Consortium Against Sexual Assault (CCASA) is a coalition of representatives from Connecticut colleges and universities who work together with CONNSACS to improve the response to and prevention of sexual violence on college campuses. CCASA provides a forum for campus faculty, administrators, and students to address the issues of sexual assault and other forms of violence on college and university campuses. It also allows campus representatives to share information, strategies, ideas, and resources in order to strengthen and support each institution's work to end sexual violence.

Several members of the Consortium recently received a Campus Grant from the Office on Violence Against Women. The grant encourages colleges and universities to work with nonprofit advocacy organizations and law enforcement "to

prevalence or dismissed it as harmless. Research into the number of teens who sext has been relatively inconclusive. In 2009, a survey from the Pew Research Center found that 4% of teen cell owners between ages 12 and 17 have sent a sext and 15% have received one. An earlier survey, conducted in 2008 by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, had very different findings: of survey respondents ages 13 – 19, 19% had sent a sext and 31% had received one. The latter survey also found that 29% had seen a nude image or video intended for someone else and 14% had forwarded an image that they had received.

Regardless of how many teens are sending and receiving sexts, the consequences of such images can be devastating. Intimate photographs that were intended for one person can be easily sent to hundreds of people, and once a digital image has been shared, it can be nearly impossible to make it disappear. Pictures that were sent as a flirty gift to a dating partner can be widely spread as retribution once a relationship turns sour. Teens who have had nude or semi-nude images of themselves spread around their schools and communities have described the experience, and the accompanying teasing of their classmates, as torture.

In at least a dozen states, including Pennsylvania, Indiana, Texas, and Washington, teens who have produced, distributed, or received sexts have been charged with felonies under existing child pornography laws. Prosecutors in several jurisdictions have argued that nude or semi-nude images of minors, regardless of whether they were produced by an adult or another minor, constitute child pornography and warrant stringent punishment. In some cases, the teen shown in the image was arrested; in others, the distributor was arrested. In a handful of cases, convicted teens were required to add their names to the sex offender registry.

In the past two years, twenty states have considered legislation to address sexting, and seven, including Connecticut, have passed laws to distinguish between teens exchanging risqué photographs and predatory adults producing and possessing child pornography. The Connecticut law, which goes into effect on October 1, 2010, states that no one between the ages of 13 and 18 can possess or transmit pornographic images of anyone who is between the ages of 13 and 16. Instead of being arrested on felony child pornography charges, anyone arrested under the new law will instead be charged with a Class A misdemeanor and will not have to register as a sex offender. Although the law does not distinguish between teens exchanging consensual sexts and teens maliciously forwarding images without the consent of the individual depicted, this legislation appropriately distinguishes predatory adult behavior from the sometimes impulsive actions of teens.

In the News

The January 12th earthquake in Haiti left the country in ruins and the citizens in misery. As if that is not bad enough, reported rape incidents have tripled. Due to a lack of secure living arrangements, limited police protection and overall dismay of the country, one citizen describes it as “an ideal climate for rape.” Full article: [New York Times](#)

There are many benefits to the technologically advanced age we are in; however there is also an increasing amount

of sexual violence on college campuses and universities to work with nonprofit advocacy organizations and law enforcement “to adopt comprehensive, coordinated responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.” Southern Connecticut State University is leading eight other campuses – including Central, Eastern, Western, Trinity College, University of Bridgeport, University of Connecticut, University of Hartford, and Quinnipiac – in collaboration with CONNSACS and the Police Officer Standards and Training Council. Over the course of the three-year grant, these partners will strengthen the collegiate response to sexual violence by focusing on education and training, judicial policy, criminal justice response, and developing Sexual Assault Response Teams.

For more information about the College Consortium or the Campus Grant, please contact Beth Hamilton, Prevention and Training Coordinator (bethany@connsacs.org).



60% of completed rapes that occur on college campuses occur in the victim's dorm room.

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program

In the fall of 2009, Governor Rell signed a Budget Implementer Bill that set aside funding to create a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) program in the state of Connecticut. This project, which is housed in the Office of Victim Services (OVS), will establish a program to train sexual assault forensic examiners and make them available to adult and adolescent sexual assault victims at participating hospitals. CONNSACS is pleased to be part of the SAFE Advisory Committee that is planning and implementing this important service for victims of sexual violence. The program will be called the Gail Burns-Smith Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program in honor of CONNSACS' first Executive Director.

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) are registered nurses, advanced practiced registered nurses or physicians who are specially trained in sexual assault victim dynamics and the collection of forensic evidence. When a sexual assault victim presents at a hospital for treatment, a SANE /SAFE can provide comprehensive care and timely evidence collection. If a sexual assault case then goes to trial, the SANE/SAFE can provide testimony, resulting in greatly improved prosecution rates. In Massachusetts, where a statewide SANE program has been operating since 1998, there has been a successful prosecution rate of 95% or better when a SANE has collected evidence and testified in court. Due to the quality of their evidence collection and their expert knowledge, SANE/SAFEs are an invaluable boon to prosecutors and can increase public safety by making it more likely that an offender will be held

There are many benefits to the technologically advanced age we are in; however there is also an increasing amount of negative consequences as well. From sexually charged violations to threats of violence and vulgar humiliations, the cyber world offers new ways for youth to bully each other. School authorities and parents are battling over how and who should be regulating. Full article: [New York Times](#)

Thousands of rape kits are collected each year and yet most victims never see justice. Part of that is due to the rape kits not actually being processed in the crime labs. Illinois is now creating new laws to reduce the backlog of sexual assault evidence kits, yet, as always, funding is an issue. Full article: [Human Rights Watch](#)

The Department of Veterans' Affairs recently announced reforms related to filing claims for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. While these new regulations are an important step toward helping soldiers access the care that they need, they may not go far enough to helping soldiers who have experienced military sexual trauma. Full article: [Color Lines](#)

Sexual Assault Crisis Services Programs in Connecticut

24 Hour Free and Confidential Hotline
1-888-999-5545 (English)
1-888-568-8332 (Español)

[Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc.](#) (Bridgeport)
Office: 203-334-6154
Hotline: 203-333-2233

[Women's Center of Greater Danbury Sexual Assault Crisis Services](#)
Office: 203-731-5200
Hotline: 203-731-5204

[Women and Families Center](#)
(Meriden, Middletown, New Haven)
Meriden office: 203-235-9297
Middletown office: 860-344-1474
New Haven office: 203-389-5010
Hotline: 203-389-9700

[Rape Crisis Center of Milford](#)
Office: 203-874-8712
Hotline: 203-878-1212

[YWCA of New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Services](#)
(Hartford, New Britain)
New Britain office: 860-225-4681
New Britain hotline: 860-223-1787
Hartford office: 860-241-9217
Hartford hotline: 860-547-1022

[The Center for Sexual Assault Crisis Counseling and Education](#) (Stamford)
Office: 203-348-9346
Hotline: 203-329-2929

[Susan B. Anthony Project](#) (Torrington)
Office: 860-489-3798
Hotline: 860-482-7133

[Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury](#)
Office: 203-753-3613
Hotline: 203-753-3613

[Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut](#)
(Willimantic, New London)
Willimantic office: 860-456-3595
Willimantic hotline: 860-456-2780

boon to prosecutors and can increase public safety by making it more likely that an offender will be held accountable.

When victims arrive at a hospital emergency room following an assault, they sometimes have to wait several hours before staff is available to provide them with medical care and collect forensic evidence. In the meantime, victims generally wait in a public waiting room and are advised not to bathe, eat, drink, or use the restroom. The resulting physical discomfort combined with the lack of privacy can compound the trauma of a sexual assault. The SAFE program will ensure that there is a dedicated on-call SANE/SAFE who can arrive at the hospital within 60 minutes and begin providing victims with the prompt, knowledgeable care that they deserve.

The SAFE Program will begin as a regional program encompassing Hartford Hospital, Saint Francis Hospital, the Hospital of Central Connecticut, Manchester Hospital, Windham Hospital, and Middlesex Hospital. The Office of Victim Services recently contracted with two individuals who will oversee the organization and implementation of the SAFE program. Rebecca Russo will be serving as the SAFE Program Coordinator and will work closely with Nancy Mayeda-Brescia, the SAFE Clinical Coordinator. Together, Russo and Brescia will recruit, train, and oversee a team of on-call SAFE/SANEs at the six participating hospitals. They will also work closely with Quinnipiac University, which has been selected to provide a seven week SAFE certification program.

OVS, CONNSACS, and other members of the SAFE Advisory Committee are impressed with Russo and Brescia's excellent professional experience and are looking forward to working with them to ensure a prompt, victim-centered medical response to sexual assault.

If you have comments or questions or wish to be removed from our newsletter distribution list, please contact us: newsletter@connacs.org

Willimantic office: 860-456-3595
Willimantic hotline: 860-456-2789
New London office: 860-442-0604
New London hotline: 860-437-7766