

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

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YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - "Stay aware, alert, alive!"

Those are the words of Campus Security Officer Sandra McConnell. McConnell recently conducted a rape awareness program at Youngstown State University, one of many sponsored by the University's Women's Resource Center and Campus Security, for students, staff and faculty. Another, a course on self-defense, is currently underway.

"Personal Safety--What Are Our Options?" has been the topic of two meetings of a new women's discussion group that meets from noon to 1 p.m., Mondays, at the Women's Resource Center on Spring Street. Other such programs are being planned for the future.

According to the most recent FBI Uniform Crime Report, YSU has the third lowest level of crime per 10,000 students among the eight state-supported universities in Ohio and the second lowest crime rate of the six state urban universities.

In order to continue, or to improve these statistics, additional YSU programs are planned to alert both male and female students, staff and faculty, and the general public about the importance personal awareness plays in reducing crime.

Officer McConnell and Gayle Magnuson, a part-time Campus Security officer and owner/instructor of a karate center, presented a number of important tips during their rape awareness program. They stressed the vulnerability and availability of victims.

MORE

ADD ONE

Magnuson said, "I can't count the times I see students walking with their heads down looking at their books. I want to shout, 'You are a victim!' Always look around."

Other tips by the instructors, which would be appropriate for anyone at anytime; include the following:

- *Appear confident.
- *Don't isolate yourself anywhere, ever. If a restroom appears empty be sure to check the stalls.
- *Know and use alternate routes to and from your destination.
- *Use the free YSU Escort Service or contact Campus Security if no escorts are available. Use campus shuttle buses whenever possible.
- *Know the locations of campus phones, especially emergency phones. These require no coins to contact the Security Department.
- *If you are apprehensive about riding in an elevator with a stranger, don't take it. However if you must use the elevator stay near the control panel and locate the emergency alarm for use if necessary.
- *Wear low, comfortable shoes, discarding high-heels if you must run.
- *Carry keys in hand when nearing your vehicle and always check the back seat to make sure it is empty.
- *If another vehicle bumps yours don't get out. Instead, try to get the license number or identification and drive to the nearest police or fire station.
- *Know locations of police and fire stations, hospital emergency rooms, and 24-hour stores or service stations.

MORE

ADD TWO

*Don't attempt to drive home, but head for one of the areas mentioned above where there are people.

*Know and use self-defense measures immediately if attacked. Don't hesitate to use pencils, pens, combs, hairspray, umbrellas, fingers, elbows, feet or head.

*Stay in public places with a "casual acquaintance." Don't go to his/her apartment or to any confined, private area unless you know him/her well.

*Report suspicious persons immediately.

*Report rape, attempted rape or attack immediately.

"Common sense is your best defense," McConnell said. "Physical self-defense would be the last resort...use awareness techniques and keep yourself out of a bad situation."

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