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Lori Wright
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Media Contact: Lori Wright
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire’s nationally known sexual and intimate partner violence prevention program, Bringing in the Bystander, kicks off its high-profile social media campaign, Know Your Power, on campus Feb. 15, 2010. The campaign will run through March 31.

Recognized nationally and internationally, the Bringing in the Bystander Project is based on studies that show the role of community norms is a significant cause of sexual and domestic violence, particularly in communities such as college campuses. It is one of the few projects of its kind featuring both the in-person program and a social marketing campaign that have been scientifically evaluated and found to be effective. The project is a collaboration of UNH and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

Exposure to the social marketing campaign and participation in the in-person prevention program have both shown to be effective in raising awareness and teaching bystander behaviors, increasing people’s knowledge of how to safely intervene in cases of sexual and domestic violence, and motivating people to step in and speak out before, during and after violence occurs.

The role that bystanders play – and do not play – in sexual assaults gained national and international media attention last year following the brutal gang rape of a California high schooler that was witnessed by as many as two dozen people stood by while the girl was assaulted by as many as 10 people.

“Bystanders weigh the costs and benefits of intervening. Bystanders are worried about whether there will be retaliation against them by others, whether they will lose social status, or whether they will be physically hurt. We need community norms that work against those costs to support bystanders for making the choice to help,” said Sharyn Potter, co-director of Prevention Innovations.

Supported by a grant for nearly $900,000, the Bringing in the Bystander Project is a collaborative project of UNH Prevention Innovations and led by researchers Victoria Banyard, professor of psychology; Sharyn Potter, associate professor of sociology; Mary Moynihan, research associate in women's studies and justice studies; and Jane Stapleton, research associate women’s studies and family studies. The goal of the project is to determine the effectiveness of and synergy between the social marketing campaign and in-person prevention program on the UNH and UMASS Lowell campuses.

“The Bringing in the Bystander Project helps prevent sexual violence by instructing community members to take an active part in preventing violence. Community members are encouraged to interrupt situations that could lead to assault or during an incident, speak out against social norms that support sexual violence, and have skills to be an effective and supportive ally to survivors after an assault,” said Banyard, co-director of Prevention Innovations.
The social marketing campaign Know Your Power (www.Know-Your-Power.org) includes displaying eight images that model bystander intervention scenarios across campus and at local businesses. UNH buses will have a full side wrap of the posters. All first-year students will receive products with the Know Your Power logo, bookmarks will be distributed in all the campus libraries, dining hall table tents will feature the campaign posters, and other innovative marketing efforts will be carried out across the campus.

Development of the eight campaign images was supported by a grant to the UNH Police Department from the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, a grant to Prevention Innovations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a grant from the UNH Parents Association.

The social marketing campaign is being administered with the cooperation of many UNH campus constituencies, including the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP), Office of Student and Academic Services, Residential Life, First Year Programs, Computer & Information Services (CIS), Parents Association, Dining Services, Housing Services, Athletics, Library Services, Police Department, and Transportation Services.

“Sexual assault and attempted sexual assault of women is a problem being addressed by many colleges and universities around the country, and first-year women students are especially vulnerable,” Stapleton said.

A study of unwanted sexual experiences conducted at UNH during the 2005-2006 academic year found that 30 percent of first-year women at UNH experienced unwanted sexual contact and 7 percent experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault, according to Moynihan. Almost half of the cases of sexual assaults of undergraduate women students involved force or threat of force.

Prevention Innovations is a research and training unit that develops, implements and evaluates cutting-edge programs, policies and practices that will end violence against women on campus. For more information, visit http://www.unh.edu/preventioninnovations/.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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