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**Fostering Healthy Relationships:
 Keeping Our Kids Safe**

By Heather Harrington, *The SVP Coordinator*

.....

WomenSafe works closely with local schools, supporting them in fostering an environment of respect and dignity among their students and faculty. WomenSafe has been providing educational presentations to K-8 graders and some high school students since 2000. We feel compelled to do this work because we believe that through positive communication and skills building, sexual abuse of children and other forms of abuse can be detected and prevented.

The first step in preventing and detecting child sexual abuse is engaging in safe, positive conversations with kids about sexuality. We, as the adults in our kids' lives, have the responsibility to educate ourselves around current strategies that supports positive, healthy communication.

We want our young people to feel that they can come to us when they need to. That means we need to equip them with accurate information that empowers them. We need to listen, really listen, and respond in a calm, sensitive way. We need to provide a framework that does not embarrass and shame young people but rather empowers them. By providing children as young as Kindergarten with basic information regarding their bodies and boundaries, we are fostering healthy relationships from an early age. Clarifying age appropriate information that includes anatomically accurate body information, tenderness and empathy skills as well as assertive communica-

tion skills helps children throughout their lives.

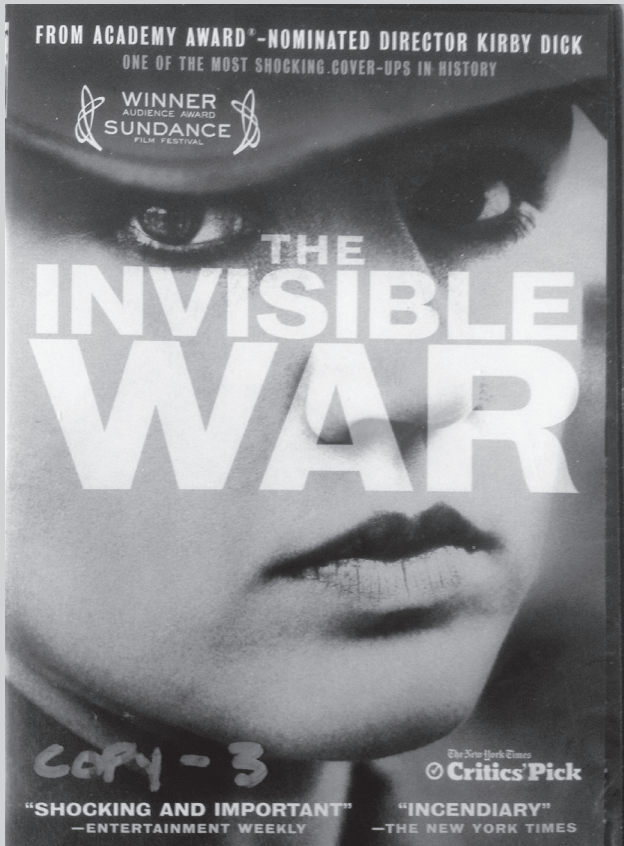
Evidenced-based curricula provide an excellent framework for WomenSafe's prevention work. The educational frameworks encourage children to identify their feelings, to listen to their "gut" and to reach out to trusted adults. They provide concrete steps to identify and access "safe go-to" people when kids are feeling "mixed-up and confused."

Many schools and administrations have welcomed WomenSafe programming into their school environments. As of 2010, Act 1 mandates that all schools offer prevention programming to every child, every grade level, every year along with trainings for professionals in the school and educational opportunities for parents and parent figures. The idea is to have the same message communicated to school faculty and staff, parents and community members to provide kids with a broad safety network.

WomenSafe seeks to partner with every school in our community to bring students of all ages consistent messages about empowerment, healthy relationships and the importance of talking to a trusted adult. We have a unique opportunity to build strong alliances with our schools and students that ultimately make our communities healthier and safer for our young people. Please contact WomenSafe's Educational team at 388-9180 for more information or to schedule an upcoming presentation in your school or community.

The Invisible War

By Danielle Wallace, *University of Maine at Augusta Senior Intern*



The *Invisible War*, directed by Kirby Dick and released in 2012, is a heartbreaking documentary of sexual violence in the military. It shows how a child's biggest dream can turn into their darkest nightmare. The courageous survivors portrayed in the movie described a passion to be part of all different branches of our military from childhood. The film did a great job showing how the trauma from sexual assault not only deeply affects the victim, but also radiates to friends and family. A weeping father who also has made the military his lifetime career, said he told his daughter she would be safe. It is reported that a woman soldier in Iraq is more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than to be killed by enemy fire.

The trauma from sexual assault is unthinkable, but all victims described that the response they got when reporting the event made the nightmare much darker. All reports of rape in the military are handled internally, making it almost inevitable that the person the victim is reporting to has already been acquainted with the

perpetrator. This system makes it impossible for a non-biased investigation. The focus of military sexual assault response is often on what the victim could have done to prevent the attack, or on whether her judgment of the attack was clear because of intoxication. Victims are often not only persuaded to rethink their account of what happened, but also face the threat of charges themselves—around alcohol/drug use, adultery, etc.

The recent military scandal involving Marines sharing sexually explicit photos of some female Marines on social media is another reminder of the sexism and rape culture that exists. The Defense Department investigation has now spread to all branches of the military looking for similar scandals.

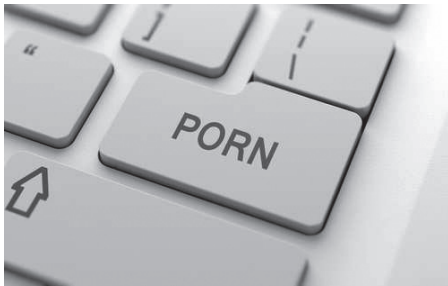
Survivors in this film talked about the physical and psychological injuries they suffered during their attacks, and the consistent refusal by the military to take responsibility for these life-changing injuries in order to protect their own. Like the documentary, *The Hunting Ground: Rape on College Campus*, the film illustrates the need for systems in our country to shift from blaming and silencing the victim to a focus on preventing sexual violence.

Since the release of this documentary, the Vermont National Guard has attended local and statewide meetings about sexual assault and domestic violence. CPT Scott Detweiler and Lt. Col. Theresa Wolbach are responsible for implementing the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR), as well as coordinating responses to domestic violence (<http://vtguard.com/resources/organization/sapr/sapr.html#>). A key component of their work is developing strong relationships and rapport with civilian organizations, including law enforcement officials. As a result of their efforts, the Vermont National Guard has entered into Memorandums of Understanding with both local law enforcement and the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Both have also participated in Intercollegiate Council on Sexual Violence meetings. As Lt. Col. Wolbach explained in 2015, these MOUs help ensure a "continuity of care" for survivors as they access services. Prevention and education are other crucial parts of Vermont National Guard's programming.

For more information and contact information for CPT Scott Detweiler and Lt. Col. Wolbach, please go to the website referenced above.

Youth and Internet Pornography

By Martha Alexander, *University of Vermont Master's in Social Work Intern*



Pornography is a 97 billion dollar (*1) a year global industry primarily accessed online. With the advent of the internet and with high speed access, porn viewers are able to peruse unlimited material, around the clock. As access to pornography has increased, so too have addictive behaviors associated with porn use. The more viewers, the more demand there is for extreme and graphic clips and films. Pornography is affecting young men and women and is playing an important role in the development of their ideas about sex, sexuality, and relationships.

FACTS

- Most American boys have sought porn online by age 10. (*2)
- Over 40% of all children aged 10-17 have seen online porn, often accidentally. (*3)
- Back in 1992 the National Institute of Health reported that about 5% of men with Erectile Dysfunction (ED) were 40 years old or younger. In 2013 a report was published which found that of the men seeking help for ED, 26% were under the age of 40. Increased awareness of ED could be part of the reason more men are seeking help, but it is also a widely-held belief that this uptick is related to increased porn use. As men become more frequent users of porn and as they become desensitized to the imagery, their arousal functioning may be impacted. (*4)

- In a recent study, 304 random mainstream porn clips were scrutinized. The researchers found that 88% contained acts of physical violence and 49% contained verbal aggression. Of the victims of these acts, 95% “responded neutrally or with pleasure” and 94% of the all victims were women. Much of the messaging in porn is that women enjoy being abused and forced sexually. (*5)
- Again, multiple studies have drawn a link between both violent and non-violent porn and values around women and sex. Respondents in these studies were more likely “to support violence against women and to believe that women enjoy being raped”. (*6)

RIPPLE EFFECTS

- Researchers have seen that high levels of porn usage online can mimic addictive symptoms such as social anxiety, ADHD, performance anxiety, OCD, and depression. (*2)
- Porn addiction can override a person's normal ability to be satiated and those individuals may seek more stimulation and more extreme sexual imagery. (*2)
- Particularly with young porn users, the brain may be altered much like the brain of any type of addict and they may begin a pattern of bingeing and craving. (*2)
- As the pleasure response numbs, so does the ability to enjoy the regular non-sexual pleasures of life.
- Addictive porn usage can desensitize people to extreme sexual behavior. (*2)
- Porn often celebrates the degradation of women and normalizes sexual aggression. (*2)
- When older men whose ED is related to the desensitizing effects of porn, stop accessing pornography, they tend to recover within

about two months. Younger men in the same situation take about 4-5 months to recover. It is suspected that their longer recovery time is because their brains have undergone more significant changes due to their youth. The older men came of age sexually before the advent of internet porn and did not spend their formative years accessing large quantities of porn.

- Perhaps because it depicts aggression as sexy, porn also seems to desensitize female porn users. They are less likely to intervene in real life when witnessing another woman being threatened or assaulted and are slower to recognize when they are themselves at risk.
- Many heterosexual young women believe they need to “pornify” themselves in order to have greater sex appeal. (*7)
- The messaging is confusing to heterosexual young men as well and they report thinking that they must be forceful and dominant in real life sexual encounters.

WHAT TO DO?

Educate yourself. Be aware of how your kids are spending their time online.

Great resources:

- Gary Wilson's TEDx talks
- Ran Gavriel's TED talk titled “Why I Stopped Watching Porn”
- Cindy Pierce at www.cindy-pierce.com.
- Peggy Orenstein's book, *Girls and Sex*.

**1 NBC News 1/20/15

*2 Dr. Gary Wilson TEDx 2012 “The great porn experiment”

*3 CNN 1.16.15

*4 Time Magazine 4.12.16

*5 National Center for Biotechnical Information AJ Bridges et al. *Violence Against Women* 16 (10), 1065-1085. 10 2010.

*6 Fightthenewdrug.org 1/20/16 “How Porn is Fueling Rape on College Campuses”

*7 Peggy Orenstein

Things I (Shouldn't) Have to Tell My Daughters

By Mary Heather Noble, *Author and WomenSafe Volunteer*

I was in the third grade when I learned how it was done. The mechanics of it, I mean. I'd had an idea before then, taken clues from the movies and soaps. Bare shouldered people in silken sheets, kissing with open mouths. I used to strip my Barbie and Ken dolls down to their plastic Malibu flesh, and then tangle them together to pretend they were "making love." That's what they called it on TV.

The truth is, I learned it from a naughty playground song.

One day my mother found Ken and Barbie in a corner of our basement, still tangled in a nude embrace. She turned to me with eyebrows raised, was there anything I wanted to ask? "No," I muttered, and scampered off with a prickly heat in my face. I thought I'd been caught knowing something I wasn't supposed to know.

It sounded innocent enough at first,

But I didn't really know. I didn't really know until the third grade, when the girl whose name I forget taught us that song in the little girls' bathroom. She repeated the words for us again and again, and our voices echoed against the cold marble stalls, the thick oak doors. We sang as we washed our hands with pink soap in cast iron sinks with streaks of rust around the drains, our eyes fixed on the holes in the tile where the mirrors used to hang.

unless you were paying attention to the words.

The next year, at my new school, I had a crush on a boy named Mitch. He couldn't pronounce his 'R's, but he had shaggy hair and clever eyes that made my heart stir when they locked with mine. Mitch liked to chase me on the playground, and sometimes I allowed myself to be caught.

It was the boy next door;

I secretly enjoyed his arms around my waist, the thrill of our bodies panting in sync. Then I'd work my fingers against his grip to open the lock and run away. One recess, though, he pulled me into the tire structure while his friends blocked the tires' open mouths. Memory holds the taste of fear, an acute scent of rubber.

who pushed me on the floor.

We had a middle school teacher we often wondered about. He liked to seat the girls in the front of the room, touch the lockets on our necks. What a pretty necklace, he'd say. He wasn't fatherly like the others, laughed a little too hard at our jokes. He had olive skin and a piercing gaze, wore cologne that liked to linger. Once, during Truth-or-Dare at a sleepover, someone confessed that he'd made an appearance in a sexual dream.

He lifted up my skirt,

That's when we started to wait for each other outside the classroom door, if one of us was ever asked to stay right after school.

and said it wouldn't hurt.

Don't ask me how we knew that this is what you ought to do. Or that showing up all by yourself would seem like asking for something bad to happen. It's like my father told me when he gave me the key to our house. Always keep this hidden, he said. Don't lose it, don't play with it, don't ever dangle it in front of others. Here's the lesson I heard: even if it's stolen, it might still be your fault.

He counted, 'one, two, three,'

A few years later, during high school gym class, as we were jogging on the track, we caught up with Christina, who had stepped aside to cry. What's wrong? we wanted to know, and

gathered around her like a cloak. My boyfriend, she could barely say. It had happened in the basement.

and stuck it into me.

Except she wasn't sure, and it became a matter of internal debate. Something in us had been trained to wonder: was it rape or just regret? We didn't know her well enough, couldn't tell by what we saw. She didn't have any bruises, no black eyes, no scratches like the victims on TV. Wouldn't a good girl have put up a fight?

My mother was surprised to see my belly rise.

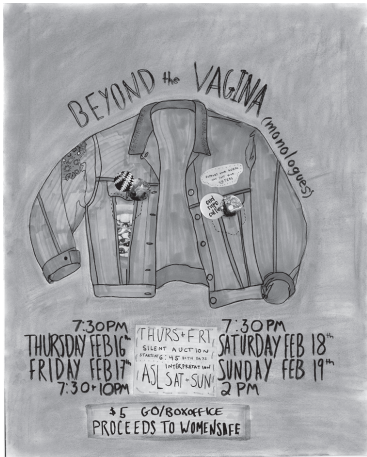
In college, during the winter, we used to swim laps at the rec center and then go back to the dorm to smoke cigarettes. The nicotine felt more potent after a workout, we savored the menthol in our chests. But on that particular night, our friend Faye never showed. Fucking lazy Faye, we said. What we didn't know was that while we squeezed the water from our ponytails and formed our mouths into 'O's to blow little rings of smoke, Faye was in a shadowy part of campus, being forced to open her mouth for something else.

My father jumped with joy: it was a baby boy!

No ambiguity there. At least I didn't think there was. When I told my parents what had happened, my father seemed perplexed. Why didn't she fight back? he asked, Did she actually see the gun?

This was originally published in the *FEM* in June 2016 and was reprinted here with the author's permission.

Beyond the Vagina (Monologues)



Thank you to the entire cast and crew of *Beyond the Vagina (Monologues)*! Many WomenSafe staff and board members attended opening night and were beyond impressed with this year's adaptation of Eve Ensler's show. We hope you made it to one of the five shows in February. A very special thank you to Sarah Karerat (Director, Producer, Script Adaptation), a former intern and current member of our Board of

Directors for her tireless efforts in this amazing production which benefitted WomenSafe. We are so proud of Sarah and floored by her talent and leadership.

Between ticket sales, general donations and an incredible silent auction coordinated by student Sydney Shuster, *Beyond the Vagina (Monologues)* raised over **\$3,000 for WomenSafe!** A heartfelt thank you to all involved!

Planned Giving



"The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

—Nelson Henderson

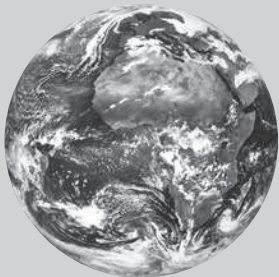
Did you know that your generosity can continue in perpetuity through our planned giving options? Leave a legacy. Please remember **WomenSafe** in your will.

All it takes is a quick phone call to your lawyer to add a charitable gift to your will.

Your generosity helps us support more survivors and increases the safety of our community.

To learn more about how your legacy can support our work, please call us at (802) 388-9180.

Help Us by Going Paperless



WomenSafe works hard to conserve our environment. Please help us by signing up to receive *The Advocate* via email. Your participation means that not only would we save more trees and use less petroleum products in the production and distribution of this newsletter, but you would also be helping us to

continue to raise awareness and consciousness of the issues faced by families, friends and neighbors who are being victimized by their partners or other people in their lives—in a cost-effective manner.

Thank you to our more than 135 e-readers who already receive the newsletter via email! If you would like to **Go Paperless**, let us know at info@womensafe.net. In order to avoid gaps in delivery, please inform us of any email address changes by calling Carol at 388-9180.

A Wish List

Please consider donating an item that can make a huge difference in the lives of people fleeing domestic or sexual violence. WomenSafe often needs the following items:

- Prepaid gas & phone cards
- Gift certificates or gift cards to local businesses:
 - grocery stores
 - salons for haircuts
 - laundromats
 - restaurants or delis (sandwich shops)
 - clothing stores
- Can Openers
- Razors/shaving cream
- Chapstick
- Deodorant
- Brushes/combs
- Decks of cards

If you are able to make a donation, please mail it to WomenSafe, PO Box 67, Middlebury, VT 05753 or call us at 388-9180 to arrange a pick up location. If you mail it, please include your name and address so we can send you a thank you note.

The Housing Crisis

By Foresta Castañeda, Transitional Housing Program Coordinator

Recent actions by the U.S. Congress are having large and immediate impacts on the state of housing here in Vermont. Congress failed to pass a final budget for 2017 and instead passed a continued resolution which would be in effect through March. This resolution means that states are only being funded at 2016 levels and that HUD (Housing Urban Development) at the federal level cannot release new funding for 2017. This resulted in Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) having to suspend the issuance of new Section 8 housing vouchers in January to ensure that they had the funding to support existing vouchers. This leaves homeless families and individuals including victims of domestic and sexual violence left at least temporarily without a path to affordable housing vouchers. If they were one of the lucky ones who met the deadline, those applicants will remain on the waitlist and will be processed to receive vouchers when and if funding resumes.

In the meantime, this has had ripple effects in our community and housing advocates are looking for alternatives. This has also affected the Vermont Rental Subsidy voucher subsidy program. New applicants to that program will now be waitlisted. Those currently with temporary vouchers that are set to expire soon may apply for an extension through June to remain housed while looking for alternatives.

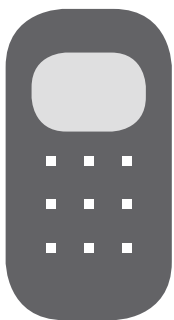
For survivors of domestic violence this means that until the final federal budget is approved and funding released to Vermont State Housing Authority, no new applicants will be able to apply for a preference voucher. Applicants who are already on the list with Transitional Housing status will remain on the list and retain their preference standing based on date of application. One positive note for survivors is that WomenSafe’s Transitional Housing Program was just renewed for a third round of federal grant funding from the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women and is accepting new applicants.

2017 WomenSafe Annual Volunteer Training

SIGN UP TODAY!

Do you have a desire to help to make your community a more just and safe place to live? Are you looking for a rewarding volunteer experience? We are now accepting applications for our 2017 Volunteer Training! This comprehensive and dynamic training opportunity is scheduled to start Saturday, September 23rd and continue through mid-October.

We encourage you to apply today! The training will prepare volunteers to provide direct service through our 24-hour hotline, at court hearings, and in the office; coordinate and assist with public awareness and community outreach events; provide childcare or perform administrative assistance tasks; and much more. Space is limited. For more details or information, please call us at 388-9180 or email us at info@womensafe.net. An application can be mailed to you or downloaded from our website: www.womensafe.net.



Donate Your Old Cell Phones to WomenSafe

Please consider donating your old or broken cell phones/Smartphones to WomenSafe. We can include them in stalking kits or recycle them for cash. If you would like to donate a phone, please call us at 388-9180.

KIMBERLY KRANS Women Who Change the World Award Celebration

By Christina Grier, *Services Director*



Cheryl Warfield Mitchell

WomenSafe was pleased to honor Cheryl Warfield Mitchell as the recipient of the 2017 Kimberly Krans Women Who Change the World Award

on Wednesday, March 29, 2017 in Middlebury. Over 50 relatives, friends and colleagues of Cheryl attended the celebration!

Cheryl attended Swarthmore College, UVM, and the Union Institute and University, but most of her learning has come from experience. Over the years, she has felt so grateful to be a part of this warm and wonderful Addison County Community. She has worked at Mary Johnson Children’s Center, been a co-founder and employee of the Addison County Parent/Child Center, Vermont’s Deputy of Agency of Human Services, worked at the University of Vermont and People of Addison County Together. Cheryl worked with others to create the Addison County Community Trust, several

child care programs, the Vermont Parent/Child Center Network, the local branch of CCV, the Addison County Farmworkers Coalition, and the Addison County Dental Clinic. She currently does consulting for NOFA (the Northeast Organic Farming Association) and the Agency of Education. She serves on the Boards of Nomadicare, Beacon Hill Friends House, Treleven, and the Permanent Fund for Vermont Children. Cheryl lives with her extended family on their sheep farm in New Haven.

We were truly honored to shine some light on such a dedicated woman who continues to make a tremendous impact on our community. The award ceremony is held in March as part of National Women’s History Month.

THANK YOU!

WomenSafe would like to give a **HUGE thanks to Jim Robinette’s students at Middlebury Union Middle School** for collecting donated items and providing over twenty holiday gift bags this past holiday season! Most families that work with us experience financial abuse, which makes the holidays more stressful. We cannot thank these students enough for giving Addison County’s families so much support, kindness and fun gifts!

A special thank you to the Turtle Fur Group of Morrisville for donating hats, ear warmers, socks and neck warmers! We hung all the items on a clothesline in our office to make them available for people coming into our office. These beautiful creations made our office space festive and helped keep people warm during the dark, cold winter. **Thank you Turtle Fur!**

Spring Has Arrived!

If you have gently used clothes or household items, please consider donating them to Neat Repeats and designating WomenSafe as the recipient of the proceeds. For more information, call Neat Repeats at 388-4488 or Carol at 388-9180.

WomenSafe

Committed to ending domestic and sexual violence

The Advocate

Newsletter of WomenSafe

WomenSafe Provides:

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24-hour Hotline

Information & Referrals

Emotional Support

Medical Advocacy

Legal Advocacy

Transitional Housing
Support & Advocacy

Systems Advocacy

Support Groups

**Community Outreach
and Education** ■

**Supervised Visitation
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Available for \$18.

They are available in black and cream; sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL (sizes tend to run small) and in curvy- and box-style cuts. Call us to place your order!

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