

Rape survivor shares her story

Liz Securro, a victim's advocate, survived gang rape during her freshman year at the University of Virginia in 1984. Twenty years later, her attacker's letter allowed her to build a case and receive some semblance of justice.

Securro spoke at the University of Toledo on April 19 as part of the ongoing events for Sexual Assault Awareness month about these events in her life and the general issues of sexual assault against women.

The author vividly described the events that transpired on the night she was gang-raped. Securro was attending a Phi Kappa Psi party, where she received a questionable drink that made her arms and legs go numb.

"There is no worse feeling than when you cannot move at all," Securro said. "He also beat me, not that that matters, because I was not behaving or cooperating, so he hit me in the ribs and on the face and in the head, and anywhere he could land a fist, despite my screams."

After receiving medical treatment, Securro met with the Dean of Students, Robert Canevari, to convey her story and get help. Even with her visible bruises, she said she received a prompt dismissal.

"He said, 'Well, what you're telling me is that you had sex with a young man, and you don't want your parents to know you're not a good girl,'" Securro recalled.

In addition to giving her false information, the dean accused her of lying and said she needed mental help, Securro said.

"A lot of the time, the finger is pointed before events are

fully found out," said Rachel Stewart, third-year pharmacy major. "That's sad because, if there's situation like this, the last thing a person should do is make the victim feel worse."

Still determined, Securro worked with the campus police, giving statements and answering questions to move her case forward; however, her efforts led nowhere.

The tables turned in September 2005, though, when one of her attackers, William Beebe, wrote her a letter to apologize. Hungry for answers, Securro responded to his apology with questions about her rape.

"I corresponded with him via email in order to find out what had happened to me that night," Securro said.

After sharing his letters with law enforcement, Beebe was arrested in 2006 and was sentenced to ten years in prison, said Securro. Even though he served less than six months, she felt justice was served since many rape victims do not come forward at all.

"I pretty much found more justice than 99.99 percent of rape victims will ever see," Securro said.

Securro also provided steps that universities can take to assist victims of sexual assault. She advocated for transparent sexual assault policies, providing victims with the choice of campus investigation versus local law enforcement and increased involvement of the campus administration.

Securro emphasized the importance for staff to attend talks like the one she was giving so that they can indicate their interest in these issues to students.

"The topic was interesting. I think it's really relatable because it's something that's very common on campus and

something that goes unnoticed,” said Macey Shock, second-year nursing student. “I like how she pointed out about the staff and how it’s important for them to be here.”

The audience gave Securro a standing ovation at the end of her lecture.