

Press Release

East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

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East Stroudsburg University Presents Sexual Assault Survivor Art Installation

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***Note to Media:** Due to the sensitive nature of this exhibit cameras will not be permitted. There will be an exclusive media opportunity to view the exhibit on Monday, April 9 from 10 – 11:30 a.m. To request media access during this time please contact Elizabeth Richardson, public relations and social media manager at 570-422-3139 or email erichard10@esu.edu.*

East Stroudsburg University will hold the “What Were You Wearing?” Survivor Art Installation from April 8 – 11, 2018 in the University Center Study Lounge, second floor.

“What Were You Wearing?” is an art installation that aims to remove the blame that is placed on a victim of sexual assault when asked this question. The exhibit will feature narratives of sexual assault survivors alongside clothing similar to what they were wearing when they were assaulted.

“The Installation challenges participants to engage with the universal connection we have with clothing and reflect on what gives this specific rape culture myth so much power,” according to information from the University of Kansas, where the exhibit first appeared. To connect the simple act of putting on clothing with pain and suffering “taints not only the individual outfit for the survivor; but also, calls in to question all simplistic and normal behaviors as dangerous.”

Stephanie McCall, Ed.D., assistant professor of professional and secondary education, first saw the media coverage of the installation from the University of Kansas on huffingtonpost.com. “It immediately affected me and my senses. When I saw it was on university campuses, I said to myself, ‘I want to do this for our campus!’” said Dr. McCall. “I think it is

proactive as art and as a political statement about an incredibly poignant social issue right now.” McCall, a sexual assault survivor herself, hopes this survivor art installation will offer the same help and healing from the trauma she has experienced.

Women’s Resources of Monroe County will provide victim care, survivor support, and counseling services at all times during the installation. Women’s Resources of Monroe County provides free and confidential counseling, legal advocacy, prevention education, and much more to ESU and the community. Jessica Boe, current prevention and outreach coordinator, and Paige Fetterly, former prevention and outreach coordinator, have been greatly involved and supportive in putting together the art installation. “When I heard about this, I thought about all of the survivors that have been asked this question,” said Boe. “People need to be more considerate and thoughtful and realize how much blame it puts on the victim.”

This project has been made possible by many departments and organizations throughout campus and the community. Doreen Tobin, D.Ed., vice president of student affairs, secured the It’s On Us grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which enables postsecondary institutions to further educate, address, prevent, and respond effectively to sexual violence. The Governor’s It’s On Us PA grant program aims to support postsecondary institutions’ efforts to create campus environments in which all community members are informed, active bystanders working together to end sexual violence, and where survivors are able to access the rights, resources, and accommodations afforded to them through state and federal law.

“What Were You Wearing?” was originally a poem written by Dr. Mary Simmerling which was adapted into the Survivor Art Installation at the University of Kansas in 2013, and has been spreading across the nation since. “My hope is that this exhibit disrupts the notion that any

victim is ‘asking for it’ because of how they dress or anything that they do,” said McCall. “We should consider survivor strength as much as we advance awareness about the trauma of sexual assault and imagine perpetrator stereotypes.”

The exhibit is open to the public Sunday, April 8, 3-6 p.m., Monday, April 9, 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesday, April 10, 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m., and Wednesday, April 11, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. The Survivor Art Installation will conclude with the annual “Take Back the Night Walk” facilitated by Women’s Resources of Monroe County. The walk will begin at the Courthouse Square in Stroudsburg at 5:30 and will conclude at ESU.