Metropolitan State University’s Night of Crime

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What do an FBI agent, a bathtub murder and Metro State have in common? The university’s Night of Crime. The event was held on Nov. 6 and was sponsored by the Psychology Club and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Student Club.

The guest speaker, Supervisory Special Agent Timothy Wittman, was first on the agenda. Wittman provided in-depth information about the FBI and discussed civil liberties violations — especially hate crimes and human trafficking.

SSA Wittman also dispelled many misconceptions about the FBI. “I found it interesting how technical the relationship between local enforcement and the FBI is, and how it’s not like what I’ve watched on TV shows like CSI,” said Laura Kokkila, a math education major at Metro State. On many crime dramas, the FBI is portrayed as having several agents working a single case; in reality, the opposite is more likely. Most FBI agents work on several cases without help. Also, unlike many criminal investigation television series, which tend to conveniently wrap up a case within an hour, a typical FBI criminal investigation lasts an average of two years.

Next on the agenda was a discussion of civil rights history and hate crimes. Wittman described the particular aspects of a case that must be present for the FBI to get involved in a case. He also recommended that, because college campuses are one of the three most common venues for hate crimes, every student on every campus needs to be aware of their surroundings in order to decrease discrimination, bullying and hate crimes.

Every year, each state submits a hate crime statistics report. However, submission of the report is voluntary and therefore cannot be relied on to be statistically legitimate. While many cases can be considered the result of a hate crime, the FBI concentrates on whether or not there was use of force or threatened used of force.

In regards to human trafficking, Wittman described various situations which initially seem harmless but may result in a form of human trafficking. When it comes to international cases, most victims are lured to the U.S. with promises of monetary gain, education or freedom. In domestic cases, victims are often coerced into trafficking activities because they have an intimate relationship with the trafficker.

Once the victim has been persuaded to comply with the trafficker’s requests, threats are made to discourage the victim from leaving the situation. Whether or not victims are domestic or international, the violation of rights is always present in human trafficking cases. This violation of rights is enough to warrant FBI involvement.

After Wittman's speech, attendees were given the chance to solve their own criminal case. Jest Murder Mystery Company performed “Bullets in the Bathtub,” while the guests enjoyed a pasta dinner. Each attendee was given a role and instructions for their character.

“During the murder mystery dinner, I enjoyed proving my innocence as suspect Candy Canneloni,” said Kokkila. “The Jest Murder Mystery Company had a fun script for characters, but also let our imagination fill in the gaps.”

Jest Murder Mystery Company was founded in 1999 by Randy Manning. Manning believed that successful murder mystery shows should feature funnier actors, funnier writing and audience participation. For more information about Jest Murder Mystery Company, check out their website at www.JestMurderMystery.com.