

University of Maryland hosts events to raise awareness on domestic violence

By Madeline Seck

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Clothesline Project t-shirts hanging from clothespins at the McKeldin Mall on Oct. 9, 2024. (Photo Credit Madeline Seck)

Content Warning: This article contains language and imagery discussing domestic violence, sexual and power-based violence.

The University of Maryland hosted events throughout October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, bringing attention to relationship violence and power-based violence that occurs on and off campus.

Grace Boudreau, an outreach coordinator with Campus Advocates Respond and Educate to Stop Violence, a campus advocacy group from the University of Maryland's Health Center, said their three big goals are to raise awareness, honor survivors and educate individuals on how to help others if they're going through relationship violence.

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About 41% of women and 26% of men experience relationship violence, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey.

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Women ages 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 are at the highest risk of experiencing relationship violence. Nearly 1 in 3 college women have been in an abusive dating relationship, based on domestic violence statistics, from the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Elijah Foster, a junior public policy major, is part of the Violence Intervention program with CARE, which educates individuals with the skills and tools to help prevent or safely intervene if they witness sexual misconduct and any form of harm.

Foster's motivation for his involvement in the program is a personal one.

"At the start of the semester, I lost a friend to domestic violence," Foster said, "and when it happened . . . [I was] wondering, was there anything I could have done. Foster shared that, "though I couldn't have done anything at the time, I want to be able to be a resource. Men can be a resource in this fight against domestic violence."

"It's important to talk about the dynamics that exist on college campuses within relationships, and how to support people that are impacted by relationship violence, and how to talk about these issues," said Charlotte Sheffield, an assistant coordinator for CARE.



The Clothesline Project

Student riding his bike stops to view the Clothesline Project on his way to class. (*Madeline Seck/The Black Explosion*)

“I am not a Su*t.”

“How do you live with yourself?”

“I was underage” or “I was asleep.”

“No means no” and “I’m so proud to call you my friend, so proud of how strong you have become.”

“I am not alone.”

These are just a handful of the anonymous messages from the Clothesline Project that have been acted upon, said to or testified by survivors and victims of power-based violence along with messages of support written on t-shirts clipped by clothespins that lined diagonally from McKeldin Library on Oct. 9.

A
NOT
A SLOW

**“I am not a su*t,” written on a yellow shirt. This is one of many anonymous messages from the Clothesline Project.
(Madeline Seck/The Black Explosion)**

The t-shirts clipped by clothespins described the graphic language of domestic violence while others provided messages of encouragement and support.

“All survivors may view it differently, but ultimately, we want it to be a very clear, bold message of the impact that sexual relationship violence has on the community so that maybe people who have fortunately not experienced the issue, can still understand how big an impact it has,” Boudreau said.

The project is first held in April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and then in October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Faith Ogugua, senior public health major and a CARE outreach peer, says the display grows every semester.

“We keep adding more and more shirts every semester. People write on the shirts and then we bring out the shirts from past semesters too,” said Faith Ogugua, senior public health major.

A student embraced her partner fighting back tears. after reading the messages on a few shirts,

A student, who asked to remain anonymous due to the project relieving personal emotions, said that they had experienced sexual violence and that seeing this project made them feel empowered.

“I had some personal experience with the stuff that the shirts are describing in terms of sexual violence. It felt good that I had someone in my corner who was able to comfort me, especially when those feelings aroused. Seeing this made me feel empowered. It made me feel that I’m not alone,” she said.

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The Memorial Chapel lit up in honor of victims and survivors who experienced domestic violence. (Grace Boudreau/CARE to Stop Violence)

The CARE to Stop Violence Office hosted its annual Purple Lights Nights event outside the Memorial Chapel on the evening of Oct. 23.

Purple lights illuminated in front of the Memorial Chapel at dusk to honor victims and survivors who experienced domestic violence.

GARDEN CHAPEL

PURPLE
LIGHTS
NIGHT



University of Maryland's CARE to Stop Violence hosts its Purple Lights Night event on Oct. 23. (Madeline Seck/The Black Explosion)

The event had tables with CARE outreach peers to educate and empower students about healthy relationships, identify different types of domestic abuse, resources for victims to get help and how to be of support for a friend.

Students came together for a night of activities including painting pumpkins and making friendship bracelets while relaxing, snacking on picnic blankets and enjoying the sunset.

“Even though the topic is on the more serious side, we try to come at it with a positive light. We'll have certain activities at events to make it more welcoming as well. We're trying to have positive vibes,” Ogugua said.

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