

CALCASA CURRENTS

Quarterly Newsletter of the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Fall 1996

ANNUAL MEETING DATE SET

If you're planning to attend the NCASA conference November 19-23 (see page 3)...please plan to join us at CalCASA's annual meeting as well.

This is the perfect opportunity for all of us to join together to celebrate the success of the conference and to put the conference theme—"Stronger Together: Mobilizing to End Sexual Violence"—into action. This is an especially important meeting because it is time, once again, for the membership to elect the Chair and Co-Chair for the next two years. The Coalition has many exciting ideas for the future, and the Board of Directors wants and needs your input. The annual meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 21, from 7-8:30 p.m., with soda and pizza provided. We are requesting a \$5 contribution from each person to help the Board offset the cost of the meal. *Be sure to phone or fax your RVSP to the Board Secretary, Shannon, at (805)736-8535 (office phone) or (805)736-8913 (fax) by no later than November 14.*

Twenty-Five Years of Rape Crisis Centers: Staying True to Our Roots

By Patti Occhiuzzo Giggans
Chair, CalCASA Board of Directors

To mark the 25th anniversary of opening the first rape crisis center in the United States, the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA) will gather this month in San Francisco for its 18th annual conference, hosted by CalCASA. A particularly appropriate location for this year's conference, California is home to at least one of this country's first rape crisis centers, Bay Area Women Against Rape in San Francisco. (There is a friendly rivalry between the East Coast and the West Coast about which rape crisis center—Bay Area Women Against Rape or the Washington, D.C. Rape Crisis Center was established first. Whichever one was first doesn't matter, of course. What does matter is that on both ends of the country, the seeds of a rape crisis movement were sown, and other centers followed.)

Twenty-five years is not a long time for this organized national movement against rape to develop, when you measure it against the violence that has been perpetrated against women throughout history. The movement's early founders were seasoned in civil rights activism, anti-Vietnam politics and the emerging women's liberation

movement of the late 60's. They were outraged at the persistent woman-hating attitudes that rape victims were subjected to, and as a result, pockets of women from across the country joined together—their collective unconscious at work—to form anti-rape squads and other groups. These women were proactive in building a safety net for women, and began to challenge and change the systems and attitudes that kept women and girls from reaching their full potential.

We owe these early founders and all those who came before us profound gratitude for taking the necessary risks to launch a movement *for* women, led *by* women.

Today we still face many of the same attitudes, misconceptions and mythologies that allow rape to persist. Yet, we know so much more about it and have made such progress in a very short time. Rape survivors struggle to speak up and to heal from what the American Medical Association called in 1995 "America's silent epidemic." Rape crisis advocates continue to aid in the healing process by respecting survivors' experiences and choices.

Continued on page 3