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 CalCASAs 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 RSVP 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, CalCASAs 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 CalCASAs. 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.

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Coalition Receives Generous Grant
By Rebecca Rolfe
Co-Chair, CalCAS A Board of Directors

CalCAS A is happy to announce receipt of a grant from the Office of Criminal Justice Planning to provide training and technical assistance to rape crisis centers throughout California. This grant will support CalCAS A's efforts to support coordination among sexual assault agencies through a broad range of activities. We will:

◆ conduct state, regional and local meetings for service providers;
◆ provide statewide organizing for women of color and lesbians on issues of violence against women;
◆ provide regional training sessions designed to strengthen service provision and administrative structures;
◆ develop a “faculty” of resources and trainers on program and administrative issues;
◆ provide training and technical assistance to individual agencies;
◆ produce an informational brochure;
◆ produce and distribute a semi-annual CalCAS A newsletter;
◆ organize statewide/national NCASA conference.

This grant represents an exciting opportunity to enhance current activities and expand into critical new areas. Among our new services is the creation of a database of people with expertise in sexual assault issues, rape prevention, program management and administrative management to provide consultation and training to rape crisis centers. This “faculty” will be solicited through recommendations from CalCAS A members and other local, regional and state resources.

The grant will also allow CalCAS A to expand its current system of training and technical assistance. Individual agencies needing training and/or technical assistance can apply for travel reimbursement and a small training stipend for either a consultant (from the faculty or an independent consultant) to visit the agency, or for agency staff to travel to a consultant’s location. Agencies can design a training program to most effectively meet their specific program or administrative needs including selecting the most highly skilled trainer. This program is designed to meet the needs of small or growing programs, programs in isolated geographic areas with limited training resources, and programs experiencing difficulty where training would be of benefit.

The training and technical assistance grant will also enable CalCAS A to sponsor a series of regional training sessions during the spring of 1997, designed to help rape crisis centers build more effective programs. CalCAS A members will be surveyed in the coming months to identify training topics of greatest interest to sexual assault service providers. The training sessions will be offered in three locations around the state to increase accessibility for members.

More information about these activities and services will be available in regional and caucus meetings and in future mailings to CalCAS A members. We look forward to implementing these new activities and in working with you to strengthen sexual assault services and rape crisis organizations statewide.
IMMIGRATION REFORM

Where do we go from here?

On September 30 President Clinton signed H.R. 3610, entitled the Immigration Reform Bill. Despite the fact that the contentious provisions barring undocumented immigrants from public schools was removed, the bill still contains unjust provisions affecting access to social services for immigrants.

What will happen to the undocumented women we serve who have little or no support, when they fall victim to rape, sexual harassment or domestic violence? For those of us serving these women and their children (as most of us are), where will we get the support to continue providing uninterrupted services? Do we close our doors and say “We are sorry, but our agency is unable to help you because our funding sources do not allow us to use federal monies to serve you?”

I don’t believe we will respond in this way, but we will have to consider our actions carefully. The prospect scares me personally as a woman of color. As a second generation American of Mexican descent, born in this country, I am frequently asked where I was born, and how long have I lived in the United States.

The anti-immigration sentiment that is very much alive in California and throughout the nation is already increasing violence against women and children. If our mission is to stop the violence, we must stop this type of thinking.

NCASA Conference Date Draws Near

The annual conference of the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault, hosted by CalCAS A in San Francisco, November 19-23, celebrates twenty-five years of rape crisis centers and the anti-rape movement. “Stronger Together: Mobilizing to End Sexual Violence” promises to be one of the most dynamic conferences in the sexual assault movement.

Conference tracks include: Innovative Interventions, Time to Talk, Prevention 2000, Building Better Programs, and the Color of Violence. The gathering begins with the Women of Color Institute, November 19 and 20, with the general conference starting on November 20. Renowned poet and political activist June Jordan and women’s movement author and activist Bettina Aptheker will present the keynote addresses. CalCAS A will sponsor a silent auction at the conference and is seeking items for this fund raiser from all member rape crisis centers in California. Centers are encouraged to donate items which are representative of your community or region. Contact your regional representative for more information.

The conference is limited to 500 attendees (for workshop space reasons) and it appears likely that that number will be reached before the conference begins, so don’t delay your registration. At this point, the conference site, the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway, is full as is the Clarion Bedford Hotel which was handling the overflow lodging. Contact Jeanne Reeder, CalCAS A Treasurer, c/o YWCA of the Mid-Peninsula Rape Crisis Center in Palo Alto for registration and alternate lodging information, (415) 494-0993.

25 Years (Continued from page 1)

And there are now more laws than ever addressing the problem of sexual assault and more disciplines than ever working in collaboration with rape crisis centers. Even so, there is still so far to go.

The early anti-rape movement changed women’s consciousness and redefined the parameters of what women would individually and collectively tolerate. The world has not been the same since. The founding mothers of this movement articulated that violence is a profound mechanism of social control and that rape is a particular form of domination based on social relations and unequal power. How well we continue to impact sexual assault will necessarily depend on how far we stray from the initial philosophy of this movement.

Rape crisis centers are certainly service providers in times of crisis, but if we are to engage in rape prevention we must stay on the path of the vision that initiated this movement 25 years ago. We must be more than social service centers. We must be social change centers. Our foremothers knew that and we must not ever forget it.
Rape Crisis Centers to Receive New Database Program

- automatically generate the statistical portion of OCJP and other funder reports with the touch of a button. A variety of program reports for internal use will be created as well (for programs such as community education, counseling services, legal services, shelter services, battered treatment programs, etc.);

WEAVE is testing the new database program internally and has selected two test sites, the El Dorado Women's Center and the Women's Center of San Joaquin, to pilot the program in the spring of 1997.

In the second year of the grant project the software application program, user's guide and samples of internal program reports and data entry forms will be disseminated during regional training sessions to all rape crisis centers and battered women's programs interested in implementing the system. WEAVE will provide follow-up technical assistance to agencies as needed. (OCJP understands that some centers already have database systems that are working well for them and therefore may not need or want to switch to WEAVE's system. As such, centers' participation in this project will be completely voluntary.)

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to Mary Struhs at WEAVE, (916) 448-2321.
The notion of personal rights to defend ourselves and live a violence-free life as females is still a very strong and threatening statement to many women. This was recently brought home to me when I visited Buenos Aires, Argentina through a collaborative project between the East Los Angeles Rape and Battering Hotline and Partners of the Americas. I was invited as a guest for a week to examine the country’s domestic violence program and exchange ideas about how we, in Los Angeles, provide services within this field.

For the last eight years I have taught hundreds of self-defense classes to a variety of people and groups, including immigrant women. During my visit to Argentina, someone became aware of my self-defense background and asked me to do some workshops. I was pleased and excited about the opportunity to provide this information to a group of women who had never been exposed to self-defense, and the women in turn were very open to the idea of an American woman sharing this type of information with them.

My intention was to structure the class similar to my regular format, while remaining open to the dynamics of the group, but I was in for a surprise. Around 40 minutes into the physical techniques portion of the class, I noticed the quietness of the class—you could literally hear a pin drop. The women’s faces wore expressions of fear, shock, disbelief and mortification. I quickly realized that the intensity of the class and my message of empowerment was intimidating and frightening to them. These women wanted to learn about self-defense techniques, but at the same time were frightened and rendered immobile by the intensity of doing so. That a woman could be physically powerful was a completely alien idea and in a sense, not a part of their consciousness. I stopped the class at that point to let group members share their feelings.

For the following hour or so we talked about those feelings that had been evoked. The women in attendance told me that they had never imagined that a woman could or would take such proactive self-defense measures. In particular, they mentioned the loudness and strength behind the “no” yell I modeled for them. They had never heard a woman yell so loudly. The women also talked about how shocking and frightening it was to think about striking and possibly injuring an assailant.

Another aspect of the class which these women found alien was the notion of personal rights for women and their children to live a life free of violence. I noticed the bewildered looks on their faces when I made statements like, “You have the right to defend yourself,” “You are a worthwhile human being,” and “You and your children deserve to live violence-free.” As an experienced instructor I hadn’t realized until that moment the personal freedoms we enjoy and how far we have come as women in this country. We have not only the right to vote, but also equality and justice, the right to voice our opinions, and most recently, the right to live violence-free. This group made me realize that while it has been a difficult struggle getting here, we must continue to push for ourselves, our children and our sisters around the world.

In the end, after a lengthy discussion I was able to resume the physical techniques demonstration and noticed a complete change in the women. They had found their inner power and voices. They kicked, yelled, punched and released their pent-up anger in what they realized was a safe environment. Their anger was born out of the inequality, injustice and vio-

The women were frightened and rendered immobile by the intensity of practicing proactive self-defense techniques.

I was so moved by their commitment that I became teary eyed and promised to share this experience with other women when I returned to the U.S. Our sisters in Argentina are at the same place we were 15 to 20 years ago—doing grassroots hands-on violence-against-women work. They deserve our acknowledgement and support as they face the daunting task ahead. We are part of global movement, whether we are just beginning to fight back as the women of Argentina are, or whether we are in California with all of the work that lies ahead for us.
The phone rings. It's 2:32 a.m. The answering service tells you there is a rape victim at Valley Medical Center. You get dressed and drive the 20 minutes to the hospital. All the while you are wondering and worrying about who and what you will encounter when you arrive. You go through the Emergency Room where the sick and bleeding are waiting to be seen, and enter a private room to find a 22-year-old college student. She is alone, frightened, and in need of a friend. She cries quietly in the corner of the room. As you hold her hand and hear her story, you feel the torment and humiliation with her. You know you are hearing about an event that no human being should have to endure. You remain strong and help her through the examination and the tortuous interviews where she must relive the assault, moment by moment. As she retells her ordeal, she looks to you for support, which you readily give. When the hospital finally releases her to go home, you look at the clock and it is 6:50 a.m. She has been at the hospital for more than four hours, though somehow it seems longer. You call her friend to come and pick her up, and find clothes for her to wear home. Her friend arrives and before she leaves, she hugs you hard enough to take your breath away. As she walks out the door, she turns and simply says, "thank you." You head for the parking lot as people begin bustling about on this new day. On your drive home you realize that the life of this 22-year-old will never be the same. You cry alone in your car for the 20 minutes it takes you to get back home...for her and for the others you know are out there, in pain.