

features

Ready! Set! Glow!

Ashland University raises sexual assault awareness on campus through fundraising event

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The month of April is here and while it calls attention to April Fools, taxes, Easter and sunny weather, the Ashland University community is making April something much more by calling attention to sexual assault awareness.

April is sexual assault awareness month and Ashland University held an action week during the first week of the month. Action week included sexual assault awareness activities such as It's on Us pledge signings, the Clothesline project and glow yoga.

"I think Ashland's done a really good job of advocating [sexual assault awareness,]" Bethany Bacus, sophomore nursing major, said. "I think they're doing a good job of trying to make everyone feel safe and promoting safety on campus."

Ashland University is part of the national It's on Us campaign which involves student signed pledges to help combat sexual assault.

"It's on Us is a very simple thing," Kimberly Lammers, Director of Residence Life and Commuter Services, said. "It's saying 'I pledge that I am not going to be part of sexual assault, I'm going to be a positive bystander.'"

The campaign is a model that other colleges and universities participate in nationwide. There are action weeks twice a year with the campaign, in October during domestic violence awareness month and the first week of April as part of sexual assault awareness month, Lammers said.

The action week on Ashland's campus this year was comprised of shirts with messages on them about sexual assault awareness as part of the clothesline project, and glow yoga in Redwood Hall.

"I thought [glow yoga] was very nice," Bacus said. "I was impressed with how many people were there,

the turnout was a lot more than I anticipated it to be, which was nice to see because of the awareness it was raising."

Glow yoga had their largest turnout this year, Lammers said. "The exciting part about that is we're going to have to reassess the venue we use, and next year we might need a bigger venue."

When glow yoga began, it was around ten students in the yard outside of Clayton, but it has grown into something much bigger, Lammers said.

The message of glow yoga was centered around friendship and the importance of friends in life as well as how to be a listening, positive and non-judgmental friend.

"Yoga is all about setting an intention for yourself," Bacus said. "So, either setting an intention of being that good friend or appreciating the good friends that you have in your life. So, I thought that was a good message to have, especially because sometimes we don't think about it very much in our day to day lives. Just to have a set amount of time to think about it and reflect on it while being in a group together with the same kind of cause was pretty nice."

The message centered around friendship allows those who have gone through sexual assault to know there are friends they can count on and for supporters of victims to know how they can be a good friend in these situations.

"It's good for people who haven't been in these situations, and to look for cardinal signs for their friends that may have gone through it or how to help someone else who is going through it who isn't their friend," Bacus said.

Ashland University works hand in hand with Safe Haven, an organization whose goal is stated to "provide prevention, intervention, support, and advocacy with em-

an end goal of breaking down the brick that had been built.

This time, she was not going to listen to the thoughts. She was going to open up and let the world know what it is like battling her own mind.

The mind of Jessica Henderson opens up what it is like for those struggling with bipolar depression and borderline personality disorder.

Henderson was first diagnosed with bipolar depression in high school but started feeling the side effects at a young age.

"When I was younger, probably around 6, I remember I went to my pediatrician and told her about these weird feelings I had been having," Henderson said. "I was having out of body experiences where I felt weird and disassociated from reality. I was put on some type of medicine and that is when it all started."

Henderson went back to her doctor in high school, during her sophomore year, and received an actual diagnosis.

"I went to my family physician and they told me that what I experienced when I was younger was the start of it," Henderson said. "I never got diagnosed but they helped me work through it and it was in high school when I was officially diagnosed with bipolar de-

pression."



GRACIE WILSON

Bethany Bacus is ready for a relaxing fluorescent yoga session with her friends.

phasis on empowerment to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking in Ashland County, 24 hours a day 365 days a year."

Ashland University and safe Haven were given a grant for 10,000 dollars for this academic year. The idea of the grant is to bring community resources together with university resources, Lammers said.

"We acquired the strengthening community partnerships grant," Lammers said. "That was from the Ohio Department of Higher Edu-

cation. It was a grant we wrote last spring...and it is working alongside Safe Haven."

Safe Haven also has a presence on the Ashland University campus. Safe Haven and the administration on campus worked to bring an office for safe haven on campus so that members of the Ashland University community can seek help without leaving campus, Lammers said.

The grant not only brought Safe Haven to campus, but also encourages the relationship between the university and the organization to

provide assistance and resources to the students, faculty and staff.

"Since we have created this grant, Safe Haven has created a sexual assault response team," Lammers said. "That involves Ashland University, it involves the sheriff and police departments, the prosecuting attorneys, the hospitals and support services. I think that makes us as an Ashland community stronger."

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A mask: the two sides of mental health

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Giant white walls surrounded her small frame sitting in the corner.

Her curly brown hair fell in her face as she loosened the grip she had around her legs and softly ran her fingers through her curls. Her arm retreated back to the safety of the other, tightly wrapped around her legs and pulling them toward her chest.

Her hazel colored eyes disappeared as she took a deep breath.

"Okay, I'm ready," she said as she tightened her grip even harder around her legs.

She leaned back against the white wall as she began to slowly open up.

The white walls she leaned on for support now, have felt like they were closing in on her. Leaving her feeling trapped; by the walls and by her mind.

Her thoughts brought destructiveness. She would tear herself down and tell herself that she was worthless. The pain she was feeling was also being felt by those closest to her, she thought. She did not deserve them and their happiness would be different without her.

The hard and deep questions about her battles and demons hit the wall she was used to building up. They hit like cannons with

everyday. The sadness held hands with the depression as they both fully engulfed her. The thoughts and pain that tagged along pushed her so far up against the walls of her mind. And she broke.

2012. A battle of learning how to attack the demons that followed her everyday, was becoming a losing fight. Her first manic episode led down the path to an end for it all.

"I had a bad episode where I went on a very manic destructive phase," Henderson said. "That destructive night is what caused me to talk about it with my mom because I had my first serious suicide attempt and she caught me."

Henderson's relationship with her mother is the strongest bond she has. In that moment, she saw the pain and hurt in her best friend and decided it was time to get help.

After she was officially diagnosed with bipolar depression, she felt relief and got answers as to why she was feeling the way she was.

"It was a huge weight lifted off my shoulders and it was nice to finally have an answer," Henderson said. "My doctor was amazing at making me feel like it was not the end of the world and that it was okay to not feel like every other teenage girl and I'm not the only person who has dealt with this. She made it seem like it was simple and some-

thing I could do and work through with treatment and therapy."

After being diagnosed, Jess struggled with the thought of letting medicines control her life as well as feeling alone but there were still good days. She finally felt like she had control of her life and found happiness in things that she did not used too.

Once she got into college, things started to change. "I felt a lot better but things are always changing and your body is always changing," Henderson said. "I started to struggle when I got into college, my diagnosis changed and my medication was changing and things were starting to become harder."

The daily struggles that came with the bipolar depression were fighting with her mind, herself and those close to her. Jess had a hard time with the anxiety attacks, anxiousness, mood swings, focusing, decision making and triggers.

According to the Mayo Clinic, bipolar disorder is a "mental health condition that causes extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression)."

Read the rest on AU-live.com