

It's Abuse Campaign Student Rally with Alpha Chi Omega Sorority and Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity – Archie Griffin

Monday, February 4, 2008

6:30 p.m.

Weigel Hall

“Good evening, everyone.

First, let me thank Rebecca and Tony for their warm introduction. I know that our Greek organizations do a wonderful job of taking the lead on challenges that face our students. Rebecca and Tony are a huge part of making certain that important issues are addressed, and I applaud their leadership.

I also want to recognize The Honorable Yvette McGee Brown and President Gordon Gee for their strong support of this very important undertaking.

You are the reason it makes me so very, very proud to lead our Ohio State Alumni Association and to be able to partner in efforts as critical as this one.

Tonight, we are going to talk about one of the important issues that the university community is facing with alarming regularity . . . Relationship Abuse. There is no place for this type of behavior in our society, yet it is a pervasive problem. Do you know that one of five young women will be abused at some point during her college career? That’s a pretty scary number – and one that surprised and saddened me when I heard it.

I was further distressed when I read an interview in our *Alumni Magazine* a few months ago with one of our campus police officers. As part of this interview, she expressed concern over the growing number of cases of predatory behavior.

This should not be happening at Ohio State – or anywhere for that matter. That’s why I am so pleased to see the “It’s Abuse” movement really picking up steam in every corner of our campus. This campaign is one of the best ways we can eliminate this scourge. Raising awareness of relationship abuse is essential to giving our students the tools they need to stop it from happening.

One part of this effort is making sure we dispel the myths and misconceptions many students have about relationship abuse. These myths often keep people silent, and silence about relationship abuse is a big obstacle we need to overcome.

Many may think that abuse is only physical. They might think that as long as their partner isn’t hitting them, they are not being abused. That is false. Abuse takes many forms, and all of them are equally damaging. Abuse can be mental, emotional, or psychological. The boyfriend or girlfriend who demeans you is just as damaging as the one who would raise a hand to you.

Another falsehood is that abuse only happens to certain people. This stigma is insidious and helps create an atmosphere where silence persists. It is so easy for a man to think, *“I’m not the type of person who would be abused, so this isn’t abuse. My girlfriend is just angry sometimes. I can deal with it.”* That mindset has to end. Relationship abuse happens to both men and women, young and old, and people of all backgrounds . . . and shapes . . . and sizes.

We all have to do our best to make sure these misconceptions are debunked at every turn. It is not good enough to let untruths persist, because that is exactly how relationship abuse is perpetuated.

I hope each and every one of you take a leadership role in making certain that we shine a spotlight on these myths and reveal them for what they are. I am asking you to carry this message with you wherever you go. Whether it is in a class, at a party, or a Buckeye football game, each of you can serve as an advocate for the truth. Each of you can be a person who exposes this troubling issue and helps to stamp it out. You can make a difference in this fight, and I have no doubt that you will. But you must be vigilant and dogged and make sure all of your fellow students understand that relationship abuse is never acceptable. And you won’t be alone.

At the Alumni Association, we are doing our part to help educate our alumni about this problem. We want them to open a dialogue with their children about this important issue. This is another way to make sure the culture of silence and ignorance is broken. You can visit our Web site at www.ohiostatealumni.org to read more about our commitment.

I won’t stand here and claim that carrying this message to people is easy to do. Speaking out and taking a stand are never easy. It almost always spurs criticism or rebuke from those who do not understand. But true leaders are willing to take that criticism. True leaders step up and advocate for change. They are the ones out there fighting to make our world a better place.

I truly believe that Ohio State students have what it takes to accept a leadership role in the fight against relationship abuse. Time and time again, I have seen how our students rise to the challenges they face. This is another one of those challenges. It’s an important one that we all must try to tackle.

Please help us as we take our next positive steps. I know you have it in you, and I know you will play a crucial role in the crusade against relationship abuse.

Thank you for your time today. I hope you stay with us and hear our panel discussion about relationship abuse. We have many people here who have first-hand experience dealing with it. I am certain that they are going to open your eyes and show you just how much of a problem this is at Ohio State and in our society. Thank you.”