

K-STATE'S CAMPAIGN FOR NONVIOLENCE WORKS TO CHANGE ATTITUDES AS WAY TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

MANHATTAN -- A campaign developed at Kansas State University to prevent violence is drawing attention at national conferences this summer.

"K-State's Campaign for Nonviolence seeks to modernize the way we deal with campus conflict and violence," said Susan Allen, director of the K-State Women's Center and co-founder of the campaign.

"Attending to victims of violence only after the fact will never change the system that generated the violence in the first place," Allen said. "In effect, this means we need to learn to see conflict within the context of systems and attend to precursors rather than wait for the violence.

"The global nonviolence axiom, 'If you want peace, work for justice,' translates locally: 'If we want a safe community, we need to work for fair relationships at all levels,'" Allen said.

K-State's Campaign for Nonviolence, founded in 2000, was the focus of a presentation at the "Violence Goes to College" national conference in Boulder, Colo., in May. The presentation, "Nonviolence Goes to College," was made by K-State's Dorinda Lambert, associate director of the university's counseling services and co-founder of the Campaign for Nonviolence; Heather Reed, assistant dean of student life; Mary Todd, assistant director of the Women's Center; and Kelly Maze, senior in life sciences, Hiawatha.

Lambert, along with K-State's Torry Dickinson, associate professor of women's studies, and Valerie Carroll, instructor of women's studies, also discussed the Campaign for Nonviolence as part of a presentation they made at the Conference of National Women's Studies Association, June 15-18, in Oakland, Calif.

Changing student attitudes about violence and nonviolence at a big university may seem like an impossible task, but that's the ultimate goal of the Campaign for Nonviolence, said Todd, who also is the campus sexual assault advocate.

"Our aim is to create the social expectation for a peaceful, respectful and just community," she said. "We think that this will result in a safer community."

The Campaign for Nonviolence is working for more balanced systems at all levels, according to Allen. "The campaign seeks to get ahead of the

violence by intervening in a dysfunctional system before it fails," she said.

In 2001, the Campaign for Nonviolence and university leaders endorsed K-State's Principles of Community, which outline the expected behavior of all members of the university community. The principles, composed by a committee led by Cia Verschelden, director of assessment at K-State and a Campaign for Nonviolence member, have been displayed in each classroom on campus.

Each fall, K-State's Campaign for Nonviolence leads a Rally for Nonviolence to promote a healthy and safe campus environment. The rally includes speakers and information booths from advocacy and social change groups at K-State and the Manhattan area.

In the spring semester, the campaign coordinates the 64-day Season for Nonviolence, Jan. 30-April 4. Inspired by the memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., the Season of Nonviolence encourages not just a vision for a nonviolent world, it give us a time to share some of the pragmatic ways and means to achieve it, Allen said. Activities include communication workshops, feature films, benefit concerts and a food drive.

The Campaign for Nonviolence also organizes academic classes and community programs, including Noontime Yoga, the Empty Bowls project and SafeZone.

"SafeZone is a project which has trained more than 400 peer allies to date among students, faculty and administrators, who then assist individuals affected by homophobia, hate crimes or hateful acts, or sexual violence," Allen said.

SafeZone will extend to Manhattan High School this fall, she said.

"These opportunities are just some of the ways we want to inspire the K-State community to embrace and model a nonviolent way of thinking about change and conflict," Allen said.

"The Campaign for Nonviolence encompasses a whole campus mindset, involving how people relate to each other, Reed said. "We want to create an environment where everyone can be their best."

By unifying the message across the campus under the nonviolence umbrella, the Campaign for Nonviolence hopes to create an overall attitude of integrity and a safe, fair campus, Reed said.

More information about the K-State Campaign for Nonviolence and the application of nonviolence tactics and tools to a campus setting is available at <http://www.k-state.edu/womenscenter>