

Big goals for a growing center

By Rita Jones, director

Hello, All! It is such a wonderful experience for me to be able to write to members of the Lehigh community as the Director of the Women's Center. Since my first day in early January, I have met such admirable and engaged staff members, students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, and staff who are committed to fostering sincere conversations on issues of gender and sex within the Lehigh context and beyond. It is truly my privilege to work with these people.

Although I still have lots to learn about, I am in the midst of planning activities and events for 2008-2009, while spending several hours each week meeting with individuals and organizations across campus. I want to make sure the Center represents everyone's voice and reaches out to serve everyone's needs. To that end, I need your help. If you are a graduate or former employee of Lehigh, email or call me with your experiences here and what you would like to have seen more of from the Center. If you are a current graduate or undergraduate student, contact me and let me what your experiences are like, ways the Center might make your experiences better, and ideas of how we can better publicize events across campus. If you are a current faculty or staff member, stop by or let me know when we can meet up for coffee to talk about how the Center can strengthen its support for what you do and better serve as a resource on sex and gender issues for faculty and staff members across campus. I can be reached by email at rmj207@lehigh.edu and by phone at 610.758.5647.

People have given me great and lofty ideas thus far, and while I know the Center cannot meet all of these needs in 8 months, I also know we can only achieve goals by actually setting them and looking forward. We can make important immediate contributions to the campus community, and looking holistically will enable us to anticipate and more effectively respond to changes in campus, national, and international climates.

If I have not made it to your organization, class, office, or building, I would like to add you to my list of visits, and please feel more than welcome to stop by the Center and chat. I enjoy learning more about the history, present, and future of Lehigh and, particularly, the lives you are leading here at Lehigh. I look forward to hearing from you and feel free to send your reflections, comments, article ideas to us for inclusion in *Women's Word*. We want to see your words and hear your voice!

Sexual Assault Awareness Month to combat violence, teach support

April marks the Women's Center's annual observance of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, designed to educate Lehigh's community on the prevalence — and prevention — of sexual assault.

Based on national statis-

tics, calculations show that two to three women are sexually assaulted every weekend on Lehigh's campus.

But the goal of the Gender and Violence working group, who sponsors SAAW, is to enlighten students on these issues and let

them know there's a safe place on campus for survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

Events include the week-long t-shirt display in the University Center, called The Clothesline Project.

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Fliers for Ariel Levy's lecture drew over 500 members of the Lehigh community. See story on page 3.

"i myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: i only know that people call me a feminist whenever i express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute."

- rebecca west,
suffragist

Healthy bodies and healthy minds go hand in hand: Body Empowerment Alliance promotes Healthy Body Image

By Jess Wren

The week of March 17, 2008 the Body Empowerment Alliance sponsored its annual Healthy Body Image Week. This year the BEA decided to take a different approach to HBIW by offering more passive than active exhibits. By using passive exhibits, more students could be reached and educated about body image.

Outside of Cort Dining Room during lunch hours, a poster of different body sizes ranging from dangerously thin to morbidly obese was hung under a "Where Do You Draw the Line?" sign. This allowed students to comment on different body types and sizes and determine which body shape was "normal." This exhibit allowed students to reflect on their own view of body image as well as how the rest of the world views body image. Additionally, outside of the Women's Center was "A Room With A View," an exhibit using artwork and images to portray body image. Students were also encouraged to donate their "skinny" jeans. By donating jeans that no longer fit, students could work toward a more positive body image.

The highlight event of the week was Courtney Martin, author of *Perfect Girls, Starving Daughters: The Frightening New Normalcy of Hating Your Body*. During her talk, Martin noted that many women often experience some type of eating disorder, ranging from casual dieting or disordered eating to a full blown eating disorder. Martin encouraged women to learn to love their own bodies and dismiss negative thoughts about their body image.

The week ended with a vivacious brown bag lunch titled, "Our Pop-Culture Diet: What Are We Consuming?" During the brown bag, members of the Lehigh community discussed how pop-culture, the media, and peers effect their body image.

*Each individual
woman's body demands
to be accepted on its
own terms.*

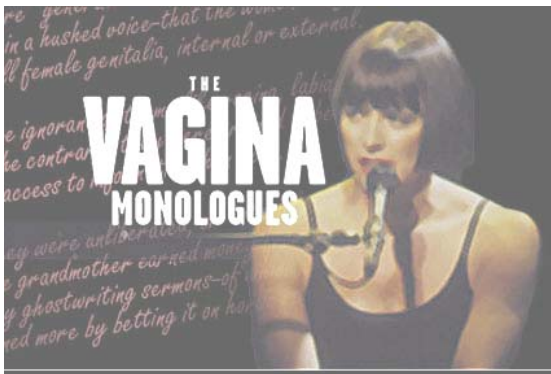
- Gloria Steinem, 2004

Vagina Monologues exceeds fundraising goal

By Xochitl Mota

This year marked the 10th year anniversary of Eve Ensler's original performance of 'The Vagina Monologues'. Inspired by interviews with real women, this play provides its audience a glimpse into the world of women. The monologues tell the stories of individual women or common experiences among women. They are funny, silly, tragic, upsetting and ultimately very real. My involvement with the Vagina Monologues began in my junior year of undergrad when I first saw the performance. It evolved as I saw it for a second time, performed in the play and then became the producer this year. Every time I have seen the performance or hear an individual monologue, the experience and meaning change. This is, perhaps, one of the best qualities that this play has: its ability to transform alongside individuals and their own experiences. As an audience member I was deeply moved by both the words and the performances. As a cast member (I had particularly depressing monologues to read) there was an opportunity to consider my role as a woman and activist in a more personal way. As the producer I had the honor and privilege of watching the power this play and movement has on others. Simply put, the play and my experiences with it have empowered me more than I ever could have imagined. I have all the cast members to thank for this.

Lehigh has performed 'The Vagina Monologues' for the past eight years. Every year the funds raised from ticket sales, merchandise and donations are given to local organizations that provide services to victims of domestic and/or sexual abuse, as well as resources to help end the cycle of violence and abuse. This year our beneficiary was Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley, a shelter for women and children. We set a goal of \$10,000 to honor this landmark anniversary. The cast was absolutely dedicated to not only this goal, but to their individual performances and the tireless task of spreading knowledge and awareness through conversation. Because of their hard work and the support of the Lehigh community we reached and surpassed our goal, and fundraised over \$12,000! This donation will have an incredible and direct impact for Turning Point, especially the women and children who desperately need their services.



Lastly, there was an amazing component to this year's production that contributed to our amazing success: the men. Dubbed "BOBS", our male volunteers not only helped us on performance nights as ushers, they also gave all the men in the Lehigh community something to aspire to. Violence against girls and women cannot be thought of as solely 'women's issues' if we ever hope to eliminate it. The cycle of violence involves all members of society, regardless of gender or age, and these men helped us in our mission to bring light to these issues for the *entire* Lehigh community.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month, cont'd...

The Clothesline Project was created to signify how many women are affected by violence. The shirts were displayed on the northside of the University Center from April 7th to 11th.

On March 31, and April 1 through 4, Sigma Chi fraternity sponsored the White Ribbon Campaign, handing out white ribbons for men to wear, representing the international campaign for preventing violence against women. Men were also encouraged to sign an anti-violence pledge to take a stand against sexual and domestic assault.



On April 7, Gail Stern talked to the Lehigh community about the way we use words to objectify women.

The discussion, "Managing Multiple Identities: When -isms intersect," took place on April 10th in the Multicultural Room. The program asked participants to consider all the times that racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination intersect.

The culminating event of Sexual Assault Awareness Month will take place on Tuesday, April 22nd: The Take Back the Night March. Starting from Lookout Point and ending in Lower Centennial dormitories, the march honors those who have survived sexual, domestic and other forms of abuse. Students and staff of the Lehigh community will join together to reclaim the voices of survivors, and reclaim the night. A rally and speak-out will follow in the Lower Cents quad.

Author, activist Ariel Levy is no girl gone wild By Nicole Perry

On March 18th Ariel Levy, the author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, came to Lehigh. Her book presents a refreshing look on the rise in popularity and normalization of what seems indeed to be the christening of a new culture with raunchy idealisms at its center. Such raunch culture products as "cardio striptease", porn star iconization, and Olympian playboy shoots, are just a few of the provocative examples Levy provided as she explored the reasons behind the curious rise in this sort of crude sexualization of women penetrating pop culture today.

Levy presented an innovative interpretation of the emergence of "What has moved into feminism's place" since the time of hairy legs, braless chests and long product-free hair so characteristic of our mother's generation. Through her discussion of the growing convention among women that suggests power over your own sexuality equals some kind of self exploitation, Levy more than subtly implied that feminism has moved towards "...an almost opposite style, attitude, and set of principles" from those

of our preceding Feminists.

Levy was witty and delightfully funny in her new publication. Her argument was persuasive and powerful in elucidating the ridiculousness of the contradictions women are presenting themselves as today. "'Raunchy' and 'Liberated' are not synonyms" said Levy. Since when did implants and complete hairlessness generate respect and symbolize female power? Levy argued the rise of the mentalities of such self-proclaimed "feminists" like Hugh Hefner are partly to blame.

Her discussion of the *why* behind the skyrocketing popularity of Hefner's bunny revolution not just among men but women alike was truly thought-provoking.

From the 'Girls Gone Wild' phenomenon and the Playboy Mansion to the increasing attendance of business women "straight from work" among the crowds at strip clubs and the like, Levy broke down the details of the major forces behind these trends. Thus, from the stems of the Male Chauvinist Pig and his degrading ideals surrounding the female sect, emerges the Female

Chauvinist Pig — a woman with an irritating contempt for the "girly-girl" and an undying devotion to the image of herself as "one-of-the-guys".



