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Targets for violence

By: Ranae Bangerter

Posted: 9/12/07

Packing books around, wearing the newest style and meeting new people all come with the first year of college. But many incoming freshmen are not aware of lurking attackers who may live just down the street.

The first two months of fall semester are the most vulnerable time for female college freshmen on campus, said USU Police Lt. Shane Sessions. And although freshmen are traditionally considered the main targets of sexual assault, he said care taken to avoid being attacked can apply to anyone.

Many things attribute to becoming assaulted or even looking vulnerable to sexual assault. Sessions said many students have lived under a rigid lifestyle at home and want to experiment with their new-found freedom at college. Some students, he said, are also inexperienced with alcohol, which is one way vulnerability can come across.

As an example, Sessions said if a student attends a party where alcohol is offered, they may try a drink and could possibly drink a little too much. If a student ends up passing out, he said the student becomes more vulnerable to sexual assault.

Another reason students may be more vulnerable is because new students are trying to develop friendships and may be more trusting to others than they should, Sessions said.

Friendships can quickly turn into a relationship, and Sessions said not all relationships are positive. Some relationships can escalate into a violent situation, which can put one party at risk.

According to the Web site, www.turningpointservices.org, some warning signs of domestic violence in relationships are intrusion, isolation, possession, jealousy, need for control and unknown pasts.

The Web site suggests more warning signs for possible domestic violence situations. One example suggests that a person who was abused by a parent or grew up in a home where an adult was abused by another adult may be prone to violence. Another warning signal might be if a person gets serious in relationships far too quickly.

If students feel uncomfortable with a specific situation or person, or if they feel like they are being stalked or followed by someone, Sessions said they should inform police or talk with Rachel Brighton in the Sexual Assault and Anti-Violence Information Office.

Sessions also said victims should keep a record if the attacking is of a tangible nature such as text messages, e-mails, photos, phone calls or other forms of contact. The records will help provide documentation if there are charges filed, he said.

The SAAVI Office is located just north of Romney Stadium in the Student Wellness Center, and it can be reached Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by calling the office at 797-1510. SAAVI's hotline number is 797-RAPE (7273).

"We really wish that it never did happen, but we do all we can to train and prevent and warn," Sessions said.

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