

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sexual assault victims, we're here to help

The numerous media stories about Jerry Sandusky, The Second Mile and Penn State University have raised awareness about child sexual abuse, mandated reporting issues and cracks in the Pennsylvania child abuse reporting system. However, where sexual assault victims of any age can go for help to deal with issues and feelings in response to the crimes they experienced has been getting minimal attention.

Many victims of sexual assault, particularly those who were victimized when they were children, have never wanted to talk to another person about the shame, guilt, anger or embarrassment they may have carried around for years. Perhaps now, news stories like the PSU reports will open dialogues and raise the possibility for these victims to seek help. Now they need to know that organizations and services are available that provide professional, confidential help. Even if the assault was never reported to the police or never went through the criminal justice system, organizations in every county provide free counseling and support to all sexual assault and rape victims.

In Bucks County, that organization is Network of Victim Assistance, or NOVA. NOVA has three offices in southern, northern and central Bucks. Counseling is provided by master-level licensed counselors who are trained specifically to help victims of sexual assault. We offer that same support and counseling to a victim's family members and significant others. Counseling is available for women, men, teens and children.

To access these free services, please call NOVA at 800-675-6900. Or for more information you can also visit

the NOVA website at www.NOVA-Bucks.org. If you live outside of Bucks County, contact the PA Coalition Against Rape (800-692-7445 or www.PCAR.org) to find the sexual assault program in your county.

We are here to help. Please call us.

Kathy Bennett

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