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The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and The Oscars create one of the largest television audiences during the course of the year. This year, almost 35 million viewers were wrapped up in the Hollywood-based competition; red carpets that seem a mile long, glitz, glamour and a colossal celebration of the entertainment industry.

Up for Best Original Song this year was “Til It Happens To You,” written by Lady Gaga and Diane Warren; a rock ballad about the aftermath of trauma. The song was made for “The Hunting Ground,” a documentary about campus sexual violence that was released last year. Vice President Joe Biden introduced the performance by speaking about the “It’s On Us” campaign and the importance of raising awareness for consent on college campuses and around the country. Lady Gaga took the stage to perform her nominated song. The 29-year-old entertainer, a victim of sexual assault herself, sat at the piano and sang powerfully while surrounded by victims of rape and sexual abuse with arms linked in solidarity. The message was meaningful, impactful, and it was real. Though it did not ultimately win the gold statue, the song drew a standing-ovation and tears from some audience members and the significance has echoed.

Each year in Central Illinois, the Center for the Prevention of Abuse comes to the aid of thousands of women, men and children who want to live free from violence and abuse. Specific to sexual assault, last year alone, The Center cared for hundreds of survivors through medical advocacy and therapeutic services.

The massive reach of the Oscars and the entertainment industry is undeniable. But, the message brought to us in less than five minutes during Lady Gaga’s performance was palpable. The need for awareness is clear. But, how will it resonate? If it brings about attention and discussion to the issue of sexual assault, that is success. If it encourages those who have been abused to find their voice and come forward, that is a great achievement. If this platform helps compel the political leaders in the State of Illinois to reinstate crucial funding for rape crisis centers and pass a FY2016 budget, that will be a tremendous victory. If it inspires good folks to support The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and other service organizations like our own, that will be outstanding.

Thank you for being a partner in peace. Let’s all apply tangible effort toward the common good, and use the tools given to us through this opportunity to work toward a safe and peaceful community.

If you are interested in donating or have questions regarding donations to The Center, contact Kelly Schoonover at 309-691-0551 or kschoonover@centerforpreventionofabuse.org.

To see the Oscar performance of “Til It Happens To You,” visit The Center’s Facebook page or our website at www.centerforpreventionofabuse.org
Every dollar raised from the Duck Race is used for The Center’s vital services. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Shaun Newell at 309-691-0551 or snewell@centerforpreventionofabuse.org.
April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. At the Center for Prevention of Abuse our focus has increased over the years in the area of prevention and training in the hopes that we can lower the crime rates of child sexual abuse. As a child sexual abuse therapist, I have found that one of the most important things that a parent can do to help prevent sexual abuse is to be aware of the red flags to look for and talk to your child about body safety and safe versus unsafe secrets throughout their childhood years.

We see about 150 children and teens at The Center each year that have experienced sexual abuse and 95% of them knew their offender. Abusers included family members, teachers, youth pastors and coaches. We hear from child sexual abuse survivors about the many tactics that their offender used to get them to go along with the abuse. The survivors wish other children knew about these tactics so they could watch for them.

The main tactics offenders use include threats, force, bribes, tricks and grooming. Most parents understand the dynamics of many of these strategies, but the one we find parents are the least knowledgeable about is grooming. Grooming is used by a sexual predator in a very intentional way. The offender begins by placing themselves in a position to have access to children, whether it is through their job, volunteering, or in a family relationship. There tend to be six identifiable stages of the grooming process.

**Targeting:** The offender looks to build a relationship with a child. Many times the offender will target a child who has increased risk factors, such as coming from a single parent home or who may have less parental supervision, a child with lower self esteem, or a child who tends to be in trouble a lot.

**Gaining Trust:** The offender spends a great deal of time getting to know the child's interests and developing common interests with them. This is also the stage where the offender may set themselves up to make the child feel like they are the only adult in their life who listens to them or loves them unconditionally. The relationship starts to take on a more special meaning to the child. This is when the parent would see the child and the offender start to spend more time together or have an increase in communication, even through e-mails or text messages. On the outside, this can still look very appropriate. The offender will also start to try out small scenarios of keeping secrets with the child to see if they will tell their parent. There has been no sexual contact yet at this stage.

**Filling a Need:** This stage brings more contact opportunities between the offender and the child. The offender may offer to help the parent out by giving rides to activities or buying the child things they have interests in that their parents haven't bought them yet. The offender will generally also have more lenient rules than the child’s parents to make the child look at them as the exception to other adults in their life.

**Isolation:** The offender finds further ways to isolate the child to create opportunities for the two of them to be alone. This can still look very normal or appropriate on the outside to the parent if the child is telling the parent things such as their teacher wants the child to stay after school for extra homework help, or the coach wants to keep the child after practice for extra one-on-one practice, or the youth pastor wants the child to go with them to an activity.

**Sexualizing the Relationship:** During this stage, normal, appropriate kinds of touches turn into confusing, inappropriate touches, and the offender takes a very gradual approach to see if the child will continue to keep secrets.

**Gaining Control:** The offender may use blame or guilt to keep the child's silence as the sexual abuse occurs. Many times the child has such great love or respect for the offender by this point that they don’t want the offender to get into trouble if they tell about the sexual abuse.

Grooming can be one of the most difficult things for kids and parents to recognize as a tactic of child sexual abuse, especially because it may happen so gradually over time. If parents are open with children about red flags to look for in someone, then children will be better prepared to handle any inappropriate situation and seek help.

ARE YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT? SPEAK UP! WE’LL LISTEN!

For more information please call
The Center for Prevention of Abuse
309-691-0551 or 1-800-559-SAFE (7233)
All services are free and confidential.
A few State lawmakers have recently taken the time to stop by and learn more about how the lack of state funding is affecting The Center. We want to thank State Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth, State Senator Chuck Weaver and State Representative Mike Unes for taking the time to learn more about our services and the long-term impact this stalemate in Springfield could have on The Center’s programs and services going forward.

Congratulations to long-time Center for Prevention of Abuse Executive Director Martha Herm for receiving a 2016 Community First Pioneer Award from Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago. Martha was nominated for the award by South Side Trust and Savings Bank. The accolades are well-deserved.

Pictured from left to right are: Roger Lundstrom, FHLBC Executive Vice President, CFO, Financial Information and Technology; Mary Beth Jackson, Center Director of Finance; Kevin Nowlan, Center Associate Executive Director; Martha Herm; Michele Anderson, South Side Bank; Carol Merna, Center Executive Director; Olga Becker, Center Director of Administration; Jill Koch, Center Grant Specialist; Matt Feldman, FHLBC President and Chief Executive Officer.

NEW LAW: A new law requires Illinois businesses to post human trafficking hotline.

A new law, that went into effect January 1st, requires certain businesses to have a human trafficking hotline sign prominently posted at places such as truck stops, airports, liquor stores and strip clubs so potential victims can see how to get help.

Carol Merna, Executive Director of The Center for Prevention of Abuse, calls Illinois a hot spot for modern day slavery.

“It tears at the very fabric of society and it’s all around us. While we haven’t seen an onslaught of victims come to The Center as of yet, Illinois is a hot spot because of all the intersecting interstates and it is without question that we will see victims, and that victims are out there right now,”

The national center that runs the hotline says there were 122 cases of human trafficking reported in Illinois last year.

<cinewsnow.com>

Learning Institute

The Center provides educational opportunities for professionals, churches, businesses and community members on abuse and its effects on everyday life.

Contact Carol 698-2874 for more information.
We would like to thank the Pekin Kiwanis Club for the generous grant awarded to The Center. The grant will be used to further allow our therapists to help children who have been traumatized by a violent situation. Everyone at The Center appreciates the support.

Did you spot Quacky in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade? A huge thank you goes out to our friends at Uftring Weston Chevy Cadillac for loaning us a wonderful car, Midstate College employees for walking with us and the Peoria Heights High School Key Club and Recycling Club for carrying our banner and throwing candy. We had a spec-quack-ular time with all of you!

A group of employees from Ameren Illinois got the spring season started off right at The Center for Prevention of Abuse. The group cleaned up landscaping and trimmed plants and bushes to make the grounds look great as all the new plants and flowers begin to grow and bloom. Thanks to everyone for all their hard work.

(Above) The Center for Prevention of Abuse is the recipient of a $25,000 grant from Ameren Illinois. The money will be used to continue our efforts to teach lessons of violence prevention in schools throughout the Tri-County area. Ameren Illinois and The Center for Prevention of Abuse have established a tremendous partnership over the years. We thank everyone at Ameren for their continued support.

(Right) Thank you to Bradley University’s Women’s Studies Department for their wonderful two-night event, Lunafest, which featured a series of short films by, for and about women. The proceeds benefitted The Center and the Breast Cancer Fund.

(Above) Thank you to Bradley University’s Alpha Chi Omega for this year’s production of The Vagina Monologues. The proceeds went to benefit The Center. We truly appreciate the great partnership we have with Alpha Chi Omega.

(Left) Thank you to everyone at Ward Chapel AME Church for the donation of much needed items. The Center’s Director of Prevention Education, Marcia Bolden, received the items from Rev. Elaine Gordon and other members of the church.
The Community Foundation of Central Illinois awarded a grant to The Center to replace windows in our Next Step Transitional Housing facility.
The Kiwanis Club of Pekin awarded a grant to The Center for children’s therapy.
Ameren Illinois awarded a donation to the bank’s Community First Campaign.

THANK YOU!

CONTRIBUTORS

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