

GaDuGi works to spread knowledge during Sexual Assault Awareness Month

By [Jonathan Shorman](#)

Tuesday, April 5, 2011

April may be Sexual Assault Awareness Month, but the workers at GaDuGi Safecenter are already all too aware of the trauma sexual assault can cause.

GaDuGi acts as the sole provider of sexual assault services in Douglas County. Its impact is felt in the hundreds of cases it takes on each year, providing everything from counseling and hospital visitation to advocacy and outreach. The center's status as sole service provider also means that it interacts with all kinds of victims. In the campus context, that often means college-age women. In addition to helping the women themselves, GaDuGi also works against what the center sees as harmful stereotypes.

"I think in the 70s we created this critter called 'date rape,'" Sarah Jane Russell, executive director, said. "And we did it because we wanted to better capture exactly what we were saw happening. But along with that came a weirdness."

Russell said individuals with biases against sexual assault victims began to claim that women couldn't be raped by people they know.

The compact social environment of the University also provides a challenge for GaDuGi as victims fear that coming forward will expose them to unwanted attention.

"People who have been assaulted feel like everyone in the whole world knows, even when that isn't true," Russell said.

Russell said the center once held for an entire semester an on-campus support group for sexual assault victims. The only problem was that no one showed up. Each week workers arrived at the meeting location but interest was minimal.

"And it really is because people were afraid they would find out they were going to that group," Russell said.

Shorman, Jonathan. "GaDuGi works to spread knowledge during Sexual Assault Awareness Month" [The University Daily Kansan](#). 5 April 2011. 2 July 2012. < <http://www.kansan.com/news/2011/apr/05/gadugi-works-spread-knowledge-during-sexual-assaul/>>

The same fear that keeps women from coming forward after a sexual assault can also keep men from coming forward as well, Susan Miller, GaDuGi therapist, said.

“Men are sometime forgotten about in the area of sexual assault but it definitely does happen for men,” Miller said. “Often men are embarrassed to come forward and seek help and counseling for these issues.”

GaDuGi does provide services for men as well and Russell said the center recently added its first male volunteer, who can assist in men’s cases.

Later in April, GaDuGi, in conjunction with the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center, will conduct outreach at the University as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

— Edited by Sarah Gregory

Assault Helplines

<http://www.nsvrc.org/saam>

<http://www.gadugisafecenter.org/>

For 24/7 Support: Headquarters Counseling Center at 785-841-2345 (Lawrence) or 1-888-899-2345 and ask for a GaDuGi SafeCenter Advocate to be paged.