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# Women at Virginia Tech

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Newsletter, Spring 2006

## From the Director

*Ellen Plummer, Women's Center Director*

We welcome you to the spring edition of our newsletter. It's been a full year and we are excited by our accomplishments and continued work to create the future for women at Virginia Tech.

In thinking about the future, I had the opportunity to speak to the Roanoke Valley branch of the AAUW at their annual meeting held on the campus of Roanoke College on April 6. What a wonderful group of active women! My discussion with them was lively and we have committed to working together on supporting the advancement and leadership of college women. In preparing my remarks for my talk with the AAUW, I ran across a note I had written to myself about using the idea of an echo to describe how women leaders can inspire each other's work.

First, if you look up the word, an echo is defined in the following way:

- 1a)** the repetition of a sound caused by reflection of sound waves **b)** the sound due to such reflection
- 2a)** a repetition or imitation of another
- 3)** one who closely imitates or repeats another's words, ideas, or acts
- 4)** a soft repetition of a musical phrase
- 5a)** the repetition of a received radio signal due especially to reflection of part of the wave from an ionized layer of the atmosphere **b (1):** the reflection of transmitted radar signals by an object **(2):** the visual indication of this reflection on a radarscope

The synonyms for Echo include: reflection, repercussion, result, trace, vestige, and response.

It seems to me that we are an echo every day – sending out, receiving, copying, initiating, being copied. Push me, pull you – back and forth.

We are a reflection – of other women like us and unlike us. Are we reflecting what is good and just and equitable and strong and smart? What have you done **TODAY** to reflect your commitment to advancing women?

An Echo is a repercussion. An act in response to – being an echo means pushing back, responding, using our voice and power to talk and act back – we need to talk and act back when things are great and, we especially need to talk and act back – be a repercussion – when things are **NOT** great.

An Echo is a Result. Each of us is a result – we have been shaped and molded and will continue to be – by elder and younger generations of women. Like an Echo, our actions need to include results – give money, give time, give tenderness, give humor, give love -- give a hoot – An Echo is the result of an initiative – a forward action that precipitates a reaction similar to the initial action. Be an Echo and put into motion the good works your commitment to social justice can inspire.



Be a Trace. Be a Vestige. Your Echo is the gift you leave for other women to push against, to rely on, to be supported by. The trace of yourself is the check you write to support a woman who is working on completing her education. The support you offer the woman who is going it alone – The trace of yourself that someone can be thankful for on their journey.

An Echo is a response. Please respond. Write, call, email, text message, blog, whatever. Respond. Use your brains, use your education, reflect, think critically, but **THINK** about your community, your world and how to make it a better place for women. All women – not just the ones who look and sound like you. In fact, you get extra Echo points for being an advocate for women who are **NOT** like you. We know, from research done at UNICEF that when we improve the lives of the women in the village – We improve the lives of **EVERYONE** in the village – the women, the girls, the men, the boys, the elders, the children. Because women are the glue of our villages – if you teach us to read, if you give us access to potable water, if you support our agricultural skills – the health and economic wellbeing of the village thrives.

Be an Echo – reflect, be engaged in repercussion, demand results from yourself and others, leave a trace and a vestige of yourself and respond. Be an Echo – the girls and women for whom we are creating the future are counting on us to be an Echo. Sometimes soft and sometimes loud – sometimes one echo, sometimes lots and lots of Echoes.

I hope for all of us the qualities of the Echo. That the Echo that is heard by those who are around us, is the Echo we have put in motion so that women and men benefit from our abilities, our commitment, our compassion, and our hope.

My appreciation lies with the women who inspire me every day. For whom I hope I am a strong Echo of support and commitment to carry on – and on – and on – and on.

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## Announcing the 2006 Advancing Women Awards Nominees

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The Advancing Women Awards are given annually in recognition of individuals who work to promote the advancement of women and/or address the needs and concerns of women at Virginia Tech. Nominees can be students, faculty members, or staff persons at Virginia Tech, or members of the surrounding community. In recognition of the many allies in our community, we invite nominations of women and men.

We are pleased to announce the names of our 2006 Advancing Women Award nominees. They are:

Robin Atkins	Milka Bliznakou
Claudia Brodtkin	Jen Butler
Christina Delgado	Kate Fisher
Elizabeth Flanagan	Roseanne Foti
Whitney French	Carola Haas
Kathleen Jones	Lauren Kiger
Sonya Lewis	Andrea Makriyianis

Perry Martin	D. Scott McCrickard
Mark McNamee	Angela Mendes
Tasha Messenger	Amy Nelson
Julie Noble	Lisa Norris
Katie Ownby	Leslie Pendleton
Donna Cassell Ratcliffe	Rhonda Rogers
Lucinda Roy	Ashley Sparks
Heather Switzer	Mary Grace Theodore
Daniel Thorp	

The student awardees will be honored at the University Student Leadership Awards ceremony to be held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The faculty and staff awardees will be honored at a reception to be held in the fall (reception details will be forthcoming).

Congratulations to all of the nominees! And thank you for all you do to support and advance women at Virginia Tech!

## Voices and Visions: Building an Inclusive Community Women's Month Celebration 2006

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*Anna LoMascolo, Assistant Director for Programming*

Women's Month recognizes, affirms, and showcases the achievements, concerns, and diversity of women. A feminist perspective – one that encourages and advances women of all races, political affiliations, national origins, religions, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and income levels – underlies all Women's Month programs and events. Women's Month is the result of the combined efforts of students, faculty, staff, and administrators at Virginia Tech as well as activists, residents, and civic leaders of the surrounding communities.

In recognition of the one-year anniversary of the signing of Virginia Tech's Principles of Community, this year's Women's Month theme was *Voices and Visions: Building an Inclusive Community*. The month's celebration was a huge success, and filled with a variety of engaging programs and events. Faculty, staff, students and community members had the opportunity to participate in a variety of events sponsored by the Women's Studies Department, the English Department, the Center for Race and Social Policy, Womanspace, Multicultural Programs and Services, OIRED, Theatre Arts, the Women's Center, the Service Learning Center, and many more. During the month's festivities, participants enjoyed musical concerts, readings, artistic and historical displays, a film series, panel discussions, informal discussions, conferences, speakers, service opportunities, workshops, a theatrical performance, and the annual Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night Rally and March.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the Women's Month 2006 Advisory Committee and the many volunteers and service-learning students who worked to make this year's celebration a success. We appreciate your contributions so much! If you are interested in helping to plan Women's Month 2007, please contact Anna LoMascolo at the Women's Center.



*Graphic by Kendall Woodard*

# The Creative Arts: A Path to Wellness and Joy

Carole M. McNamee, PhD  
Affiliate Research Professor and Clinical Associate  
The Family Therapy Center  
Department of Human Development  
Director, Willowbank Creative Center



I am passionate about the effect of the creative arts on our sense of well-being. This passion was first evident as a child and adolescent when drawing and ballet were a source of both joy and solace. By the age of eight I had read every book about young ballerinas in the public library in my home town. I was at peace when dancing or

engaged in art activities. When the time came to be realistic about career goals, I chose a career congruent with some of my talents, math and computer science, and not my passion. It would, after all, guarantee a lucrative career and a path to the “good life.” As I pursued this path in college, I was warned that certain courses, e.g. studio art, might not look “good” on my applications to graduate school in math or computer science. I chose to take the courses anyway and I have never regretted the decision, nor did it keep me out of graduate school.

As I continued along my professional path as a computer scientist, I balanced the requisite linear thinking with myriad courses in arts and crafts. In time, my offspring were captive beneficiaries of my attention to books like *Guiding Your Child to a More Creative Life* by Fredelle Maynard. I enjoyed fostering the creative energy of my three children. They were not to be constrained by the lines in a coloring book --- coloring “outside the lines” was not only tolerated, it was embraced.

Over time, I realized that it wasn't just my children who needed to live creatively, but that I needed to flap my wings a bit and take some creative risks. I have moved into the field of therapy specializing in the use of the creative arts.

Willowbank Creative Center (WBCC) in Blacksburg is evidence that I am embracing my passion. WBCC is not yet a year old and it is currently offering and sponsoring a number of programs including: Beginner's Mind --- a monthly workshop focused on creative process and experimentation with various media; creative process workshops with a focus on Julia Cameron's, *The Artist's Way*; mandala workshops; workshop/retreats focused on teambuilding and workgroup process; The Arts in Healthcare Project, an outreach project of The Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech; and several research projects.

I was asked this past week if I was “living my dream” and I am. I believe that experiences with the creative arts are metaphors for our lived experience. I enjoy providing opportunities for others to challenge themselves and the creative arts provide a path.

## Help Create the Future for Women!

Help us send a delegation of leaders to the 2006 Annual Conference for Women College Leaders. Held in Washington DC, June 7-10, 2006, and hosted by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), this year's conference is a summit on sexual harassment. National speakers and women college leaders from all 50 states will attend sessions that report data, engage leaders in policy discussions, and challenge us to address harassment on our home campuses. Information on the conference can be found at [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org).

This is a terrific opportunity! The cost to attend the conference for each student is \$500. This includes lodging, meals, and conference registration. All contributions of any amount help us support Virginia Tech's women college leaders.

Questions? Contact Ellen Plummer at 540-231-7806 or [eplummer@vt.edu](mailto:eplummer@vt.edu).



The Women's Center Staff Mural, created at Willowbank Creative Center, January 2006

# Violence Against Women Act Grant Update

*Gina Desiderio, Victim Services Outreach Coordinator*

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant supports a partnership between the Women's Center and the Office of Judicial Affairs against sexual violence. The grant initiative focuses efforts on increased education and awareness about violence against women on the Virginia Tech campus, increased reporting of cases to law enforcement and judicial affairs, and holding perpetrators accountable.

Instead of bringing a speaker to campus for a sexual violence program in the spring semester, the VAWA grant team opted to coordinate an event more tailored to the campus community. To better prepare students to have a safe and fun spring break, an event titled Destination: Spring Break! offered more than 150 students the opportunity to gain some practical knowledge while also meeting fellow travelers. This pre-Spring break event was made possible by co-sponsorship from the Women's Center, Judicial Affairs, Residence Life, Student Life, University Unions and Student Activities, and the College Alcohol Abuse Prevention Center.

Amidst palm trees, beach balls, and tropical fish, the peer educators drew from their individual expertise to facilitate small-group information sessions about alcohol and drug abuse, health and wellness, sexual assault and violence, and safer sexual behaviors. Participating peer educators included ADAPT (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Team), Health Advocates (resource advocates from various sororities), SAVES (Sexual Assault & Violence Education by Students), and Wellness Peer Educators. Resource tables were provided by Schiffert Health Center, Health Education, the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley, the College Alcohol Abuse Prevention Center, and Study Abroad.

Educational programs like Destination: Spring Break! are just one component of the VAWA grant team's efforts. We remain committed to reaching more members of the campus community each year, as demonstrated by our efforts in Fall 2005. In one semester, we reached more than 2,700 campus and community members through large-venue programming, anti-violence campaigns, as well as outreach initiatives on campus and in the community. Over 33 hours were spent training more than 1,000 Virginia Tech students, faculty, staff, and allied professionals in responding to reports of violence. Thirty-seven victims sought counseling and advocacy services during fall 2005 for sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and cyberstalking. We continue to help victims with reporting processes, filing on-campus judicial referrals, police reports, and Equal Opportunity claims.

Three hundred and sixty-six cadets were trained on sexual harassment prevention in March. This training followed a similar training held during Fall 2005 for four hundred upper-

class cadets. These sessions mark the first time the VAWA Team has partnered with the Corps of Cadets to address sexual harassment. We thank our Corps liaison, Lt. Tasha Messenger, as well as our training co-facilitators.

In the final weeks of the spring semester, we will continue working on grant initiatives. We are showcasing our newly-acquired closed-circuit television system in a sexual misconduct mock hearing on April 6<sup>th</sup>, where we will train faculty, staff, and student judicial board members. April 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> marks Virginia Tech's inaugural Cyberstalking Awareness Week, featuring a poster campaign. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the grant team will train on-call faculty and staff on students' online interaction.

We continue to build on the progress we made last year when sexual assault education became a significantly enhanced session during New Student Orientation, and reached more than 4,950 students. In addition to covering sexual assault during July orientation, we will address issues of cyber safety following the tremendous popularity of online communities such as Facebook and MySpace. Modeled after the Health Advocate program, where two women from each sorority are trained in issues of women's health and sexual violence, we will recruit RA's in the Fall 2006 semester to serve as Stop Abuse Resource Advocates (after completing some additional training offered by the Women's Center and Judicial Affairs). These students will serve as resources in the residence halls on issues of sexual violence.

We remain grateful to our campus and community grant partners. Without their continued support of the VT VAWA grant initiatives, we would not be able to continue to move forward, raising awareness of issues sexual violence and better serving people in need of counseling and advocacy. We look forward to continued collaboration as we continue to serve the VT campus community.



*Sexual Assault & Violence Education by Students (S.A.V.E.S.) Peer Educators talk to Destination Spring Break-ers about being safe and prepared for vacation*

# The 2007 Mary Jones Berry Collection

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*Anna LoMascolo, Assistant Director for Programming*

On March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the Class of 2007 held their Ring Dance in Squires Commonwealth Ballroom at Virginia Tech. In attendance was Ms. Mary Jones Berry (VT '62), the Class of 2007 Ring Collection namesake honoree. Ms. Berry was recognized last fall when the Class of 2007 ring collection premiered in October. To learn more about the heritage of the ring design tradition, please visit <http://www.balfour.com/ORP/VA120785/design.aspx>.

Ms. Berry has a distinct career history of attaining “firsts” for women in the field of engineering and hers truly defines a lifetime of achievement. To highlight a sampling from her pioneering career, Ms. Berry was the *only* woman in her 1962 graduating class from Virginia Tech’s Department of Mechanical Engineering. She was the *first* woman registered as a professional engineer by the Commonwealth of Virginia. She was the *first* woman

appointed to the State Board of Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Landscape Architects. Ms. Berry was the *first* female engineer appointed by a Virginia governor to serve on the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. She was the *first* woman to receive her alma mater’s highest honor, the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award. She was the *first* woman to receive the College of Engineering’s Distinguished Service Award. She also served as President of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association in 1999. Ms. Berry is currently the Executive Director of Engineering at the Gainesville, Virginia facility of Aerojet General Corporation.

We congratulate Ms. Mary Jones Berry on being named the Class of 2007 Ring Collection namesake honoree and thank her for her ongoing commitment and service to Virginia Tech!

## Virginia Tech Women’s Leadership & Mentoring Program

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*Christine Dennis Smith*

*Assistant Director for Counseling and Advocacy*

At the Women’s Center we are very excited about a new leadership opportunity for women. This year marks the first year of the Virginia Tech Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Program. The program brings together a group of women in administrative roles in a series of sessions on topics related to professional development. Each session is taught by a senior administrator. Topics include personnel management, budget, governance and institutional decision-making, supervision, mentoring, and a resume swap. We have been very fortunate to have an outstanding group of senior administrative women leading the program and an outstanding group of class members.

This year’s faculty are Cynthia Bonner, Chief of Staff and Director of Administration in Student Affairs; Donna Cassell Ratcliffe, Director of Career Services; Pat Hyer, Associate Provost for Academic Administration; Karen Sanders, Assistant Provost and Director of Academic Support Services; Linda Woodard, Assistant Vice President for Personnel Services; and Ellen Plummer, Director of the Women’s Center.

This year’s class members are Megan Armbruster, Yalana Bryant, Sharrika Davis, Christine Dennis Smith, Monika Gibson, Frances Keene, Kia Kuresman, Kara Lattimer, Debbi Morgan, Shannon Phillips, and Sherry Hazelwood.

As a class member I have found the Mentoring and Leadership program to be a wonderful opportunity for junior women administrators to get together to learn and share from one another and from senior administrators. It

has been such a positive experience I think that many of us don’t want it to end.

Kia Kuresman from Residence Life shared: “I feel that I have benefited from the program in a wide variety of ways. Not only have I learned more about the University and the experiences of other women across campus, but I have also met and connected with amazing women who have provided me with a lot of insight on work, family, and experience. I look forward to the rest of the year and hope to maintain these relationships when I take the next step in my career.”

Debbi Morgan from Human Resources stated: “The program has exposed me to a wide variety of people and work styles, as well as has forced me to think about what is next in terms of my career. It is too easy to sit back and wait for something to happen rather than being proactive about our careers.”

Finally, I think Sharrika Davis from the Higher Education and Student Affairs Program sums it up quite well: “The program is a wonderful opportunity each month to get together with other young women administrators in the university community to discuss issues and focus on how our work adds to the larger work of the VT community. It’s a very welcome break in the month to get re-energized about higher education, administration, and my career path in general. There hasn’t been a place where young women leaders can get together and discuss issues, triumphs and concerns about life and career. At least once each month I know I have a safe place to do that. That’s been the greatest joy of the program.”

## Meet Our New Team Members

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### Melissa Lind

Melissa Lind, LCSW is the part-time Victim Advocate at the Women's Center. Her responsibilities include out reach to the international and LGBTQ communities and the development of a forensic nursing response protocol with the local hospital to compliment VT's sexual violence response protocol. In addition, Melissa provides the following services to students, faculty and staff who are victims of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and harassment: counseling, crisis intervention, advocacy, accompaniment to law enforcement, medical facilities, and judicial proceedings, as well as information and referral.

Melissa has a master's degree in social work from Portland State University and is a licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Virginia. She recently moved from Eugene, Oregon where she was a therapist specializing in the treatment of trauma, depression and anxiety disorders.

### Bob Miller

Bob Miller, Ed.D., has joined the Women's Center staff this spring. He is a licensed psychologist with extensive experience providing clinical services. He will be assisting the Women's Center in the provision of counseling support to survivors and will be researching projects aimed at supporting women's health and wellness.



## The V-Day Initiative Supports *Prozac Blues*

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*Anna LoMascolo, Assistant Director for Programming*

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Women's Month and the Virginia Tech Theatre Arts Department presented *Prozac Blues*, an original musical performance piece exploring the complexities surrounding antidepressants and women's mental health issues. Researched, written, and conceptualized by Ann Kilkelly, Brandiff Caron, and a team of theatre artists, *Prozac Blues* featured a unique blend of interactive theatre, story-telling, and movement. The cast ensemble was comprised of graduate, undergraduate, faculty, and community artists working together. In addition to its talented cast, the show featured the musical ensemble of Leslie Brooks, Carol Burch-Brown, Kayla Bancroft, and Jake Null.

March was the second time out with the show, originally performed as *Life of the Pharm* during the 2005 Choices and Challenges Forum. For Women's Month, Ann Kilkelly and her artistic team collaborated with performer, choreographer, and Virginia Tech artist-in-residency, Celeste Miller, to tailor the production to specifically focus on women's mental health issues. Ms. Miller worked closely with the cast on breathing and movement techniques, as well as sharing personal stories of depression, psychotropic drug use, and other women's health issues. According to the production's stage manager, Autumn Aldridge, Ms. Miller noted cast member's movements as they told their stories, and incorporated those into the show. She stated, "The movements you saw were the cast's stories in motion."

Each evening's performance was followed by a one-hour "talk back" for audience members to dialogue with the cast and crew about depression, pharmaceuticals, and other women's mental health concerns. This was a tremendous open forum opportunity for women and men to share their own stories and experiences with one another.

Those of us in the Virginia Tech community know Dr. Ann Kilkelly, professor of theatre arts and women's studies, as an individual dedicated to making the arts a site of important research, discovery, recovery, and celebration. In the director's note to *Prozac Blues* she stated, "We hope that this intersection of feminism, science and theatre will provide an opportunity for public dialogue." *Prozac Blues* stands as another unique and invaluable contribution to theatre in service of the community.

Our sincere thanks goes out to the Virginia Tech V-Day Initiative for their support of last month's production of *Prozac Blues*. We specifically wish to recognize Katie Ownby, Sonya Lewis, Jen Butler, Elizabeth Knapp, Dan Thorp, Ashley Tomisek, Jennifer Schneider, and Rebecca Sweeney for their commitment and energies. Your contributions and hard work made this an experience to remember!

# Blacksburg AAUW Supports Women's Center Library

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In the fall of 2005, the Women's Center's library was adopted by the Blacksburg Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). As a fundraising project, the women of the Blacksburg Branch AAUW group worked hard to donate both books and money to fund the purchase of needed books and other media. Some eighty-seven books were collected to add to the current collection, as well as \$650.

The library collection holds books donated to and purchased by the Women's Center, as well as books donated to the Women's Studies program in memory of Rebecca Wight, a former Tech student who was murdered on the Appalachian Trail in 1988. The collection currently is comprised of a

broad range of works related to women, gender and feminism, including books on parenting, domestic violence, stalking, sexualities, sports, fiction, religion, education, and equity, among others.

A tea was hosted on December 13, 2005 to thank the women of AAUW for their generosity. We are currently reevaluating the collection in order to identify gaps, and will spend the donated money to fill those. If you would like to donate to our collection, please contact Jessie Meltsner at [jmelts@vt.edu](mailto:jmelts@vt.edu). If you would like to use or collection or check-out books, come to the Women's Center during regular business hours.

## The Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night 2006

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*Chelsea Benincasa, Womanspace  
Co-Coordinator of Take Back the Night  
Honors Junior, Communication Major, Urban Affairs and  
Planning Minor*

Womanspace is a VT student organization made up of women and men who are actively focused on empowering women and girls. The group serves as an advocate for women's concerns on campus, and Womanspace works on issues related to gender and equality, violence against women, body image, and women's reproductive health. Every spring, Womanspace works diligently to produce two large-scale events: the Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night.

On Wednesday, March 29 and Thursday, March 30, the Clothesline Project was displayed on the Drillfield, with the help of Womanspace and spear-headed by the Montgomery County Chapter of the National Organization for Women. The Clothesline Project is a visual testimony of the devastating effect of violence against women, and the impact it has on society, especially within our own community. Survivors, friends, and families of victims in our area have been contributing shirts to the line since 1994. A flyer from the information booth reads, "The shirts are hung side by side on a clothesline, as if the survivors themselves were standing shoulder to shoulder, bearing witness to the violence committed against women and girls on a daily basis." Survivors are encouraged to make their own shirt, and every time the Clothesline is displayed there is a week-long workshop in the

Women's Center where materials are provided in a safe place to make the shirt.

This year, we had substantial media coverage for both the Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night. Volunteers and leaders for the events are positive that the project has had lasting effects on students and community members. The seventeenth annual Take Back the Night Rally and March was held on the Drillfield on Thursday, March 30. The rally and candlelight march brought the campus and community together to protest violence against women and girls, as well as to promote awareness of the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetrate violence and harassment. Take Back the Night elevates the idea of empowerment to show that we, as a community, have the commitment to stop violence. College students are at the highest risk for sexual assault, so it is essential that events such as Take Back the Night occur on campus.



*Students read survivor testimonials at the  
Clothesline Display on the Drillfield  
Photo by Chelsea Benincasa*

This year, we had over thirty-six organizations march, and many individuals marched along through campus and into downtown Blacksburg. Take Back the Night was filled with rally music, live performers, and three personal stories of sexual assault. As we marched, we had one united voice, and we let the world know that we are committed to ending violence against women. Take Back the Night is an event that everyone should take part in; this type of rally and march has an impact in a way that nothing else does, and its participants will always want to be involved in the struggle against

violence against women.

# First Women's Leadership Conference for Students Held in March

## *Women's Center Receptionist Team Leaders*

The Virginia Tech Women's Center presented the first Women's Leadership Conference for undergraduate students on Saturday, March 18, 2006. The Conference kicked off with a fun, interactive "getting to know you" exercise, led by Maureen Lazar from the University of Pittsburgh. Ms. Lazar's session was followed by keynote speaker, Dr. Zenobia Hikes, Virginia Tech's Vice President for Student Affairs. Dr. Hikes gave a dynamic and inspiring speech challenging undergraduate VT women to take action, asking us "what are you going to do" to activate change on the Virginia Tech campus and, in essence, the world. Ms. Lazar's interactive session and Dr. Hikes's speech were the perfect combination to get everyone energized and excited for the day.

Throughout the day there were several breakout sessions scheduled. These breakout sessions were centered on different topics, including women in non-traditional fields, women in politics and leadership roles, mentoring and networking. Participants were able to choose the sessions that they wished to attend. "I loved the personal finances workshop. It really opened up to me how important it is to save early and how much to spend," said Katie Ownby, Women's Center Receptionist Team Leader and conference attendee, on her favorite breakout session.

All conference attendees and presenters were encouraged to network over boxed lunches provided to all attending. Presenters and attendees mingled and exchanged business cards printed for them specifically for the conference. "Networking has proved to be a valuable resource and this was a great opportunity to meet many wonderful people and make new connections," commented Aaran Kelley, a Women's Center Receptionist Team Leader and conference attendee.

At the conclusion of the breakout sessions, participants came together to hear the closing address given by Ms. Mary Berry, a Virginia Tech alumna known for attaining many "firsts" for women engineers. Dr. Berry delivered a stimulating and insightful speech focusing on women and professionalism in the workplace. This fantastic day was concluded by a dessert reception sponsored by the College of Engineering, with food provided by Professional Catering. To round out an exciting day, thirty door prizes were given to randomly selected conference attendees. The door prizes ranged from soft briefcases to gift certificates from local vendors.

It is likely that all would agree that the first Women's Leadership Conference was a huge success!



*Closing keynote speaker, Mary Berry, with student leaders from the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets*

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