

By Tim Fenster

For years, university officials across America have been looking for ways to prevent incidents of sexual assault against their students.

They require incoming freshmen to attend sexual assault prevention programs during orientation, they support awareness initiatives like Take Back The Night, they install emergency phones across campus.

And yet the problem persists.

Today, one in every five women is the victim of a completed or attempted sexual assault while attending an institute of higher education in America, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

Now, many colleges are implementing new and innovative programs to stress the importance of clear, affirmative consent prior to — and during — sexual activity, as well as support the survivors of sexual assault.

Locally, one of the most groundbreaking new initiatives is the I Love Consent program at Buffalo State College. The program brings together students and faculty members for hour-long workshops where they have frank, in-depth discussions

about sex and consent.

For most of the students who attend, it's the first time that they have had this kind of conversation in a classroom — if ever.

"This is like a new language for them," said Paula Madrigal, assistant director of Prevention & Health Promotion at Buff State, who co-hosts most of the workshops. "We want to make sure they are asking the right questions, as difficult as they are, so that we can have this conversation."

The topics they cover mostly pertain to consent — that it must be affirmative and enthusiastic, that it is active (meaning it can be withdrawn at any time), and that it is best simply to ask what one's partner likes and doesn't like.

In one workshop that was featured on an NPR program titled "Birds & Bees" last May, students discussed their anxieties about the idea of active consent.

"It's a continuous process of checking up, or checking in, either/or. What does that mean?" Madrigal asks.

"You keep asking her?" asks one student. "That's weird."

"That kind of messes up the

mood," says another.

Madrigal later uses an example of one partner deciding to have rougher intercourse or bringing in a third party. If the other partner is not comfortable with that, she explains, they can withdraw their consent, and the other person must stop.

"Our workshops go into the real nitty-gritty details," she said.

Buffalo State is not alone in trying to have these in-depth, real-world conversations about sex and consent with their students. What makes the I Love Consent program unique is that each workshop features both a female and a male presenter — most often Madrigal and Jason Parker,



diversity program coordinator at Buff State.

Parker founded the program last year in coordination with a graduate intern, Kerrie Findlay. He was inspired by similar discussion workshops that he had attended at the Colorado State University.

When they began holding the workshops at Buff State, Madrigal and Parker soon found that students — particularly the boys — were most comfortable when both a male and female faculty member were present.

"It's not something we planned on; it just worked so well," Parker said.

Often, Madrigal says, when a female alone moderates such a discus-







**All Care for Women** is an all female practice that believes in educating patients so they can make well-informed decisions regarding their health. We offer routine Gyn care as well as standard and high-risk prenatal care. We have on-site prenatal and Gyn standard and 3-D ultrasound as well as bone density. We offer in-office procedures such as LEEP, Hysteroscope, D&C, Essure, and Endometrial ablation. The physicians are well experienced in laparoscopic surgical techniques and offer robotic assisted procedures. Also prescribe compounded hormonal replacement therapy.



**6095 Transit Road • East Amherst**  
**716-634-9303**  
**www.allcareforwomen.com**



## Closure to my leg pain and varicose veins.

**There is a solution to the discomfort, swelling and appearance of varicose veins.**

*The Venefit procedure* is a clinically proven, minimally invasive way to treat venous reflux, the underlying cause of varicose veins, with little or no pain. Venefit patients can return to everyday activities within a day, and the Venefit procedure is covered by most insurance providers. Find out if the Venefit procedure is right for you.

## SOUTH TOWNS SURGICAL ASSOCIATES

310 Sterling Drive, Suite 105, Orchard Park, NY 14127  
**675-7730**

*Venefit* <https://venefitprocedures.com>  
 The leading alternative to painful vein stripping



Daniel J. Patterson  
 D.O., F.A.C.O.S.

Copyright 2011 Covidien. All rights reserved.

Often, Madrigal says, when a female alone moderates such a discussion about sex, male students can feel defensive or as though they are being "preached to."

But with Parker, they can relate to his perspective, and he can use himself as an example. It also helps students break down the misconception that males are always the perpetrators in sex crimes and can't be victims.

"It's a message coming from the horse's mouth," Madrigal said. "They think about the context a little more in depth."

Currently, all student athletes and leaders of campus organizations are required to attend at least one I Love Consent workshop. Madrigal believes this is a good starting point for the program, as student leaders can teach what they learned to club members, and so on.

But she would like to see the day when all students at Buff State and other colleges have these kinds of conversations about consent in real-world scenarios.

"I would love to see all students go through it. But you have got to start somewhere," Madrigal said.

In addition to the workshops, I Love Consent volunteers maintain a vigorous public awareness campaign that includes YouTube videos and theatre performances that explain consent and the importance of bystander intervention.

"From what we have learned and what we have seen, we believe it is going to be very effective," Madrigal said.

