



Mt. Graham Safe House • Regional Program for Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault •  
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## *Happy New Year!*

What a year it has been! What will your New Year resolution is? Loose some weight, exercise more, quit smoking, not hit someone, don't rape that person, or make an abusive reference to our transgender community. However, do you think sexual abusers/predators make that promise to themselves for their New Year resolutions? *More than likely not.* Educators in this field can ensure that our youth are educated about abusive relationships and learn *not* to involve themselves in an abusive relationship. I truly believe that we can transform the images our youth have of what a positive relationship involves. This year has been very interesting here at Mt. Graham Safe House (MGSB). After Sean Wenham left our Education Department, I have been greeted from the Rape Prevention and Education Program with open arms; however I am still not up to speed with the legacy Sean built with his peers and involvement with schools. Fear not, I will not be defeated! Having persistence will overcome this rural community regarding Rape Prevention and Education.

MGSB is currently planning our annual Teen Fair which also has the teen maze included. We are excited about the theme this year, which is the "Game of Life." Additionally, the "violence room" educates teens that participate through the maze about prevention methods and resources available. Most of the students attending the fair are from Graham County, however, some plan to arrive from New Mexico and other surrounding counties. With the rural schools in Graham, Greenlee, and on the San Carlos reservation, at times we struggle with getting the education message of rape prevention out. These schools remain largely invisible since they are small, sparsely populated, and widely dispersed. This makes rural schools such a challenge! I have been trying to find solutions however, it has been made more difficult because of the message we are trying to circulate. We can and will provide Rape Prevention and Education Programs for the rural schools if we have adequate support from the communities. The program can contribute drastically to the continued growth and development of their communities. Teaching our youth about sexual assault, healthy relationships, boundaries, respect, personal rights, and consent are needed by both urban and rural communities. Sexual assault and rape are perceived to exist only in urban areas, however in reality; the rural populations of teens are faced with society's pressing concerns are the same ones that are found in urban and metropolitan areas. Rural communities are perceived as small, slow-paced towns

free of violent crime and drugs, however the lower population rate does not mean crime and drugs are not just as high as in the larger cities. The schools in these communities, and the community itself, require a variety of solutions that include the need for prevention, intervention, and treatment programs tailored to the unique needs of each community. The diversity of rural communities also requires a community-development approach to prevention and intervention rather than an individual or psychological approach. The unique characteristics of small communities indicate that a community-wide approach is ideally suited to the strengths of small, rural communities. The lack of community change could be the root cause of the tribulations facing small communities. Mt. Graham Safe House Rape Prevention and Education Program provide a broad range of creative services for this progressing community. When we partner up together within the community, it makes for an effective use of team of resources. The community excels in momentum, enthusiasm, and pride.

I plan on building a stronger relationship with the school districts so that we might be able to overcome the negative effects of living in rural areas. The positive solution is to provide these schools with the tools of an effective prevention program and emphasize to the teens that there are safe schools that promote student involvement. Make it your resolution this year to get involved with any school or school board to emphasize the fact that rural areas need and deserve the same attention and focus as urban areas.

My resolution for 2006 is to start a Peer Education group. Most of the teens that I have mentioned the Choose How I Live Life ("CHILL") program to are receptive and eager to hear more about the program. The CHILL program is still moving forward. It is amazing to hear that the teens have really picked up on the saying that accompanies "CHILL," Choose How I Live Life and do respond. This gives teens a way to relate to a small catchy term that can be spread to each other increasing the knowledge about choices they can make, such as being abstinent or what to do if we have been involved with a date/acquaintance rape. If we learn to "chill out" instead of "acting out," we empower teens to help them make better choices. So, please remember when in any situation you are not alone. Be there for someone who might be a survivor of dating violence and support them. Let us **all** get involved with the CHILL program!

Written by Heather Ballard, Prevention Education Specialist