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**April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and organizers at the University of Iowa have planned a full slate of lectures, performances and special events to mark the occasion, including a candlelight vigil.**

  

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i-NewsWire, 2005-03-24 - The UI's Rape Victim Advocacy Program ( RVAP ) and the UI Opera Program kick things off with paired events Friday, April 1, in Clapp Recital Hall: "RANT!," an interactive lecture/performance by stand-up comedian Gail Stern ( right ), at 6 p.m. followed at 8 p.m. by the UI Martha-Ellen Tye Opera Theater's presentation of "The Rape of Lucretia," Benjamin Britten's chamber opera that provides contemporary and religious perspectives to an ancient story of sexual violence.

Stern's presentation of "RANT!" is free and open to the public, but tickets must be purchased through the Hancher Box Office for the opera production. For details on "The Rape of Lucretia" - which will also be performed at 8 p.m. April 2 and 2 p.m. April 3 -- visit <http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu> or see an earlier release on the performance.

Created by the Oak Park, Ill., based company Catharsis Productions, "RANT!" will help participants build connections between the ways society has historically used epithets to dehumanize minority groups and the way society today uses words to objectify women. Participants will be asked to challenge the acceptance of these words, to identify what purposes they serve, and to question their ultimate impact. Stern uses her years of experience in stand-up and improvisational comedy to lighten the tension and create a safe, fun environment to discuss these ideas.

The production grew out of Stern's work with the Chicago Task Force on Hate Crimes Against Women, and was initially designed as a means of training prosecutors and law enforcement officers in Illinois how to use the "gender component" of the Illinois Hate Crime Statute. The statute allows for crimes determined to be motivated by an offender's bias against a specific group because of their race, national origin, creed, color, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, religion or gender to be charged as a more serious crime.

Other events scheduled for the month - all free and open to the public and sponsored entirely or in part by RVAP -- include:

April 1-5: Installation of The Clothesline Project in Clapp Recital Hall lobby. The display was designed by Monica Correia and Maria Martin of the UI Art Department. Public viewing times for The Clothesline Project are during the performance of "The Rape of Lucretia," as well as from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. April 4 and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 5.

April 4: A Day to End Sexual Violence Candlelight Vigil, Clapp Recital Hall Lobby, 6 p.m. Come light a candle honoring the strength of victim/survivors, the support of their loved ones and the power of healing. This vigil is being held the day before a Statewide Candlelight Vigil that is set for Tuesday, April 5, also to honor people affected by sexual assault. At 7:30 p.m. April 5 the public is encouraged to display a wax or electric candle in a window or outside the front doors of their homes to show unity in the fight against sexual assault.

April 6: Film Screening of "Cohen's Wife" and discussion with filmmaker Nava Nussan Heifetz, UI Hillel, 122 E. Market St., 7 p.m. This Yiddish film tells the story of a young Cohen's wife, Rivki, who is raped by a stranger. The trauma that impacts Rivki and the marriage has the added complication of the Rabbinic Court decision as to whether Mottel, being a Cohen, can continue being married to Rivki. This event is being cosponsored by the Agudas Achim Congregation, the UI Department of Anthropology, UI Hillel Jewish Student Center, UI School of Social Work and the Women's Resource and Action Center.

April 11: Crime Victims' Rights Week Opening Ceremony, Iowa City Public Library Room A, 5:30 p.m. This event is being sponsored by the Johnson County Victim Advisory Board.

April 12: RVAP Fundraiser and Silent Auction, Diamond Dave's restaurant, Old Capitol Mall, 5-9 p.m. Bring your friends for dinner and honor healthy, respectful relationships.

April 19: Film Screening of "Searching for Angela Shelton," 100 Phillips Hall, UI campus, 7 p.m. Filmmaker Shelton set out on a journey to meet every other Angela Shelton in America as a way to survey American women. What she discovered was that 24 out of 40 Angela Sheltons she spoke to had been raped, beaten or molested just like her. The filmmaker's survey of women becomes a journey of self-discovery during which she decides to confront her past and her father. The Angela Sheltons complete the journey by teaching the filmmaker about forgiveness, faith and the power of the human spirit in all of us, no matter what your name is. See <http://www.searchingforangelashelton.com> for more information about the film.

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all UI-sponsored programs. If you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation in order to participate in these programs, please contact RVAP in advance at 335-6001.

RVAP provides confidential, accessible support and advocacy to victim/survivors of sexual abuse and their friends and family members. RVAP also works to create a community free from sexual violence by providing education and prevention strategies and by promoting social change, and it operates the Iowa

Sexual Abuse Hotline.

For more information about RVAP or the Sexual Assault Awareness Month events, visit the RVAP website at [www.uiowa.edu/~rvap](http://www.uiowa.edu/~rvap).

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