

Organizations provide sex education to parents of special needs children, teens

By Brandon White
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The Carrboro Commons

Parents of special needs children arrived at Carrboro High School the evening of April 14 for a discussion about sex education and safety.

Representatives from the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and the Special Needs Advisory Council in Carrboro provided information about teaching the concept of consent to their children during a critical transition period in their lives.

“Recently there was a student who allegedly had special needs who was charged with sexual assault on campus,” said Amy Fowler, the chairperson of SNAC who has a son with autism. “So we felt like this was a necessary and important discussion to have with parents.”

The OCRCC aims to use sex education as a way to prevent sexual violence and other forms of oppression. The organization provides classes and seminars to all individuals. They offer classes related to special needs children and teenagers four to five times a year.

Rachel Valentine, community education director for the OCRCC, led a presentation on



Rachel Valentine gives a presentation on consent and sex education related to special needs teenagers at Carrboro High School. Valentine said that a common misconception about special needs children is that they are asexual, hypersexual, or predatory. She said that the OCRCC works to defeat these stereotypes. (Staff photo by Brandon White)

Thursday called “Only Yes Means Yes.” She said that her own experiences motivated her to help everyone understand sexual consent and prevent sexual assault.

“I got involved in this field at UNC,” she said. “I had a lot of friends who were victims of sexual assault, so I felt like I had to do something.”

Valentine addressed that parents can be obstacles to their children’s sex education because of the sensitivity of the subject and concerns about children’s reactions. But she encouraged the two sets of parents in the room to talk about sex in a way their children will understand, include pictures, and not be afraid to admitting that they may not have all the answers.

The use of pictures is a common method for the OCRCC to convey its message. An exercise that Valentine uses with her special

needs classes involves a picture being displayed on a projection screen. The students have to decide if the situation displays consent and safe touches, or if it represents bad or uncomfortable touches that children and teenagers should avoid. Valentine advised the parents to tell their children that they should remove themselves from any situation that makes them uncomfortable.

Dolores Chandler, an assistant to Valentine, said that the OCRCC’s programs are available to almost all students in the area, and she believes that they are very important in a time when the U.S. is falling behind in sex education.

“I go to all of the middle and high schools in the region,” Chandler said. “We have over 100 programs that include sex education and health courses, and I would highly recommend these to anyone.”

For more information
Orange County Rape Crisis Center:
<http://ocrcc.org/>

Special Needs Advisory Council:
<http://snac.chccs.k12.nc.us/>