

Vigil promotes abuse awareness

By **Melanie Brandert**
Staff Reporter

When Rolin Lemon came home from work that day, he didn't expect to find a bloody handprint on his front door.

He did not expect to find his wife in the living room of the apartment, trying to hide behind a chair "like an alley cat caught in the headlights of a car."

Nor was he prepared for her to lunge at him, with a knife in her hand. The same knife she had buried deep in the stomach of one of her attackers hours earlier to make her escape.

Lemon, a junior education major, recalled that day at a Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault candlelight vigil Friday night on Broyhill Plaza.

About 50 people attended the vigil, sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Women's Center and the Women's Studies Association.

Lemon said his wife had taken a ride on her motorcycle after classes to unwind, stopping at the same rest stop she went to every day to check her oil. People often asked her if she needed help, he said, his voice choking on tears.

But two men didn't offer their help. Jumping out of their car, Lemon said, they rushed toward her and knocked her down. They dragged her into the woods, where she was beaten and repeatedly raped for four hours.

Statistics show one in four women in the United States will be a victim of sexual assault before age 25, he said. According to the Lincoln Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, the center received more than 3,950 reports of sexual assault last year.

Lemon said many men believe violence does not affect them. Those casual attitudes about rape, assault and harassment should not continue, he said.

"Stop sweeping the issue away," he said. "Stop supporting the people who want you to believe they are concerned, but then turn and give their support to those who commit these vile acts."

Kay Siebler, a member of the National Organization for Women, said public inaction has led some men to believe they have a privilege that grants them the right to beat or rape a woman. Siebler cited recent incidents involving NU football players Lawrence



Matthew Miller/DN

Kat Vintom participates in a candlelight vigil for domestic violence Friday night at Broyhill Plaza.

Phillips and Christian Peter.

Phillips awaits sentencing for the assault of Kate McEwen, a sophomore basketball player. Peter was sentenced to 18 months probation in May 1994 after being found guilty of a third-degree sexual assault charge.

"The message here is that a player can rape or beat a woman, get caught, be convicted and still be a Nebraska Husker hero," Siebler said.

Men need to join women and speak out against this violence, she said. "When men work against this sanctioning privilege, the statistics will decrease," she said.

In the United States, she said, a woman is battered every 15 seconds.

The local crisis center received 5,900 reports of domestic violence in 1994. At UNL, there have been 30

cases of domestic violence reported to Victims Services since Jan. 1.

Stan and Pat Harms, both wearing T-shirts that pictured their daughter Candice, shared their experience. Harms, a former UNL student, was kidnapped, raped and murdered in 1992.

Stan Harms said they could not imagine what Candice must have endured at the hands of Roger Bjorklund and Scott Barney, who were found guilty of first-degree murder in Harms' death.

There is no excuse for the violence, he said, and he encouraged abuse and rape victims to seek help.

"Let someone else help you get over that," he said. "It's not something you can go through alone."

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