

CAMPUS NEWS

Take Back The Night: A Night to Remember

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A little rain and wind could not hold back the enthusiasm of hundreds of the *Take Back the Night* participants at Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) who came with the goal of raising awareness about domestic violence, sexual assault, and relationship violence. *Take Back the Night* began in the 1970s and consists of hundreds of marches and demonstrations across the world, providing for an informative and enlightening event which brings the community together to take a stand against all forms of violence.

Take Back the Night was organized at SCCC by a coalition of professors, staff, students, and alumni, and was a year in the making after numerous planning meetings offering tabling opportunities at each campus and involved other community organizations and engagement events. Those engagement events brought together Coalition members, students and local organizations to creatively and artistically express encouraging messages to survivors of various forms of violence. Themes for engagement events included decorating rocks and lanterns with powerful and inspiring words of strength, and the creation of butterflies with messages of hope and alliance. The projects were then displayed at the event, decorating the halls and rooms utilized during the march.

Following speeches, participants broke into four teams to march and stop at several stations, each with its own theme and story to tell. Topics touched upon at stations included: myths, misconceptions, and truths of human trafficking; statistics about domestic violence and sexual assault; survivor stories; a walk through the “bridge of silence”; honoring survivors with lanterns filled with inspiring messages; and a candlelight vigil.

Twenty-six local non-profit agencies and resources lined the halls to distribute information, answer questions, and provide giveaway items.

These organizations included victim assistance providers, law enforcement, and other non-profit agencies whose goals are to prevent and respond to various forms of violence and abuse across all ages. The interactions between these organizations and participants served to open lines of communication and make connections, which may one day help to bring services, support, and comfort to those in need.

This year’s event was held in-person after being a virtual program during the pandemic. Despite inclement weather, the event went off without a hitch and included many touching moments along with an abundance of information for students and community members who were able to learn more about these topics and connect with local resources. Speakers included: SCCC President, Edward T. Bona-hue, Ph.D.; Interim Executive Dean, Donna Ciampa, Ed. D.; Chair of the *Take Back the Night* Planning Committee, Danielle DiMauro-Brooks; Director of Campus Activities, Grant Campus, Lisa Hamilton; and Gina Ocello, Chair of Butterfly Project.

Participants had the opportunity to win a variety of raffle prizes generously donated by local community organizations and businesses. Finn, the SCCC Shark mascot made an appearance and encouraged the excitement of the evening. The night was also filled with music thanks to several local musicians along with chants to rally and inspire participants into action. This event was a true partnership between the college, the coalition and the local community to bring everyone together with the shared mission of disrupting and ending violence.

While *Take Back the Night* is a one-night event, the conversations and momentum to enact change will continue long after the last person left and the doors were shut.

