



# Monthly Visions

**“Prevent Sexual Violence... in our workplaces.”**

Adapted from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/default.aspx>

Since 2001, April is nationally recognized and observed as the Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The purpose of SAAM is to promote public awareness and understanding about sexual violence. It is an effort to increase support for survivors and families of rape and sexual assault, as well as for agencies providing crisis intervention and prevention services. In addition, through organized events and activities during the month, SAAM aims to encourage the public to take action to address sexual violence. Recognizing SAAM each year calls attention to sexual violence as a major public health problem and reinforces the need for continued prevention efforts.

The theme of this year’s SAAM campaign is “Prevent Sexual Violence... in our workplaces.” It is designed to help employers recognize the vital role workplace culture plays in the prevention of sexual violence and to promote a healthy work environment.



You, too, can make a difference whether by wearing a teal ribbon (teal is the official color representing sexual violence), talking to your co-workers and employers about healthy work environment, or participating in local events throughout the month of April.

Support your local events:

SafeHouse Center and SAPAC (Washtenaw County)			
April 30, 2008	SafeHouse Center	Speak Out	A safe space for survivors of sexual, dating, and domestic violence to share their stories.
Turning Point, Inc. (Macomb County)			
April 24, 2008	Roseville Recreation Center	Take Back The Night (TBTN)	TBTN is an international rally and march that is organized in local communities with the purpose of unifying women, men, and children in an awareness of violence against women, children, and families.
HAVEN (Oakland County)			
April 18, 2008 7pm	AJ's Café 240 W 9 Mile Rd Ferndale, Michigan 48220	Take Back The Night	Rally and March

**AACAT Performance at the University of Michigan**

By Kristin McMillin, Class of '09

New Visions’ Arts & Activism Community Action Team’s performance of *A Step Up*, in my Asian Pacific American Women class (363) on March 13, was incredibly powerful. My classmates are in agreement that the use of theater is a creative and engaging way to organize around the issue of domestic/dating violence. Not only is the storyline moving and realistic, but it is also informative as it shows that domestic/dating violence can be physical, verbal, or emotional. The students gained a greater perspective of the rationales of the characters when they asked the actors (who were answering the questions in character rather than themselves) questions about their actions and behavior. Overall, the performance increased my awareness of the violence against women in Asian communities of Southeast Michigan and the need to address this issue.

**New Visions** is a community-university partnership whose mission is to inspire and support sustainable community action for ending violence against women in Asian communities of Southeast Michigan. Affiliated with the University of Michigan School of Social Work, we work with local Asian communities and domestic violence-related agencies to achieve one vision: “Asian women are safe, and Asian communities are free of violence.”

**Save-the-Date for Mother’s Day Event**

Upcoming May (1st or 2nd week) New Visions will be working with the community to hold Mothers day event . For more info, contact [newvisions@umich.edu](mailto:newvisions@umich.edu)

## AACAT Performs at the Plymouth Gurdwara

By: Neel Pandya, AACAT Facilitator

On Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the AA CAT was invited to perform their sketch, *A Step Up*, for the membership of the Plymouth Gurdwara. *A Step Up* is a story about an immigrant couple in a domestic violence situation. This performance was spearheaded by Raman Singh, who is a member of the OE CAT and an active member of the Plymouth Gurdwara.

Before we walked into the main hall, we removed our shoes and covered our heads – a customary practice when entering a *gurdwara*, or Sikh house of worship (Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world founded in 15<sup>th</sup> Century Northern India). Ms. Singh, our contact, invited us to eat *langer*, which is vegetarian food from the communal kitchen. The team sat and crossed our legs, then members of gurdwara set plates down on the floor in front of us and started serving us food.

The AA CAT has performed and presented in various settings, and audiences. However, this performance was unique. It was the first time performing for a Sikh community, and provided us with a first-hand opportunity to experience some of their traditions and customs. We enjoyed this exchange of information and ideas between the AA CAT members and members of a Sikh community.

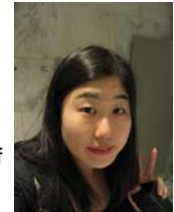
As someone who sat in the audience during the

performance, I saw teenagers whispering to their friends, women taking care of their babies while listening to the performance, and older men sipping hot tea while closely watching the characters on stage.

After the performance, the characters were invited back on stage to answer questions from the audience – which had swelled to over 30 people by then. Audience members interacted with the characters as though they were friends, often asking them difficult questions: *How far would you let the abuse continue until 'enough is enough'?* or *Are the children the reason why you keep up with the abuse?*

The discussion was heated at times, and engaged men and women, young and old. While the audience filled out evaluations, the AA CAT members spoke with members about the organization, the use of theater in discussing domestic violence, and resources available in Southeast Michigan.

This performance is especially memorable for me because it was in a community that we were not familiar with, and required the AA CAT to step outside of their comfort zone, allowing them to experience and adapt to diverse settings and perspectives. It was not just a performance, but a life experience.



## Member Spotlight: Sungwon Park

Sungwon Park is a graduate student at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Ms. Park has been an active member of New Visions' Outreach & Engagement Community Action Team (OE CAT) since June of 2007. She will be graduating with a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the end of this term and will relocate to Los Angeles, California, to pursue her professional career.

Ms. Park first joined New Visions as a representative of SafeHouse Center (a domestic violence program in Washtenaw County providing a variety of services for battered women), where she was interning at the time. As an intern at SafeHouse Center, she recognized that battered Korean women were calling for assistance. However, it seemed that Korean community remained silent about this issue. She hoped by joining New Visions, she would be able to find opportunities to work with Korean/Korean American communities in addressing domestic violence.

As a member of the OE CAT, she has been actively involved in planning and implementing the "Tea in the Afternoon," a small community-based gathering where Korean women get together to discuss domestic violence and related issues through the use of media in an open and

safe space. This gathering began in the Fall of 2007 and continues to meet twice a month in Ann Arbor. Ms. Park shares, "I am most proud to see the participants of the gathering change in terms of how they view domestic violence; they have developed an understanding that domestic violence is rooted in how women have been traditionally treated, within the family structure and society. I am also proud that we have come to a point where we do not have to be afraid of saying the word, 'domestic violence'". In addition, being involved in New Visions has given her learning opportunities in organizing communities around an issue as sensitive as domestic violence. Ms. Park adds, "Although our perspectives and experiences may differ at times, I learned a lot from other members, and diverse perspectives we were able to share in our meetings."

As Ms. Park embarks on a new phase of her life as a social worker, she says, "Domestic violence prevention may seem like catching a cloud; it may seem impossible and difficult. But I have learned that we can affect people over time and see the changes that we hope to make." She adds, "I also want to encourage women who are suffering in silence to seek help."

### New Visions: Alliance to End Violence in Asian/Asian American Communities

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