Mom uses love to end hate crime, promote respect

By Cara Latham

Judy Shepard, mother of Matthew Shepard, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime, is “simply a mom with a story,” she said in her touching, motivational speech to the audience in the Bart Luedeke Center (BLC) theater on Wednesday.

Shepard, who spoke as part of the Lecture Series, said that her motivation to speak is the hope of preventing more hate crimes. Her message to the audience included sentiments about treating all individuals equally with respect and promoting education to reduce hatred.

“I don’t know where this bigotry comes from. In my view, we are all part of the human race—we should all treat our neighbors with equal respect and admiration and love,” she said.

Shepard began by reading the victim impact statement that she read at the trial, which details both the circumstances surrounding Matthew’s death and the pain her family experienced throughout the whole ordeal.

“It was kind of a relief that Matt was no longer suffering, but also a realization that our suffering was just beginning,” said Shepard. “All our hopes for Matt were killed. All the hopes and dreams...”

After reading the statement, Shepard spoke about the importance of diversity, stating that a peaceful world could not exist without embracing it and learning to respect others through learning about them.

“Seven players from the community also found time around campus, the Aramark employees showed their loyalty to the Rider community, according to Associate Vice-President of Student Affairs Anthony Campbell.

“The Facilities crew did a marvelous job in preparing the campus for opening, as well as the Aramark employees who came to campus during the snowstorm to feed our students,” said Campbell.

Reca said that when dealing with a major snowstorm, Facilities follows a standard protocol that ensures safety for anyone on the Lawrenceville campus.

“Our first priority is to make sure the students can get in and out of the buildings safely,” said Reca. “[We also make sure] emergency vehicles are able to get in and out of the campus or to a residence hall.”

The administration at Rider University also took safety precautions into consideration when it made the decision to move registration from Sunday when it made the decision to move registration from Sunday to Monday.

“Because of the severity of the storm and the conditions of the roads, we decided it would not be safe to bring the staff to campus,” said Campbell. “We did not want to encourage students to drive in the storm so registration was moved to Monday, Jan. 24.”

Some students were eager to move back onto campus and get situated before the big storm hit and said that they were relieved to learn that residence halls were opened a day earlier on Friday, Jan. 21 in preparation for the storm.

However, many students were looking forward to both a longer winter break and the cancellation of classes.

“I was disappointed that school wasn’t canceled,” said Frawley.

According to Reca, it was because of all the extra help, support and overtime that workers put in that classes began on Monday, Jan. 24.

“Because of the volume of people we had stay straight through and were willing to spend almost two days here, we also got a good jump on the academic side and got a lot of those walk ways open,” said Reca. “Needless to say, this is why we opened classes on Monday.”

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Students from the Rider community also found time to volunteer during move-in weekend.

“Seven players from the women’s softball team came in,” said Reca. “These ladies shoveld walk ways and steps and put calcium chloride down. It was a team effort.”

Along with the many members of Facilities who put in extra time around campus, the Westminster students perform in The Laramie Project, before Shepard’s speech.

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