

# Need for activism expressed in colloquy

By Cara Latham

Hate, violence and injustice were issues discussed at the Second Annual Composition Program Colloquy, featuring members from the Rider 2002 cast of *The Laramie Project*, who gave their insight on the topics of homophobia, gay rights and hate crimes that affect everyone.

The colloquy, entitled *Homophobia, Violence, and Gay & Lesbian Rights*, sponsored by the English Department, was held in the Bronc Diner yesterday from 11:30 a.m. to 1p.m. It stemmed from Matthew Shepard's story, the play and Judy Shepard's speech. Matthew Shepard was the victim of a brutal hate crime because of his sexual preference that resulted in his death.

Members of the cast discussed what they had learned from the play and the impact Matthew Shepard's story had on them.

Senior Robert Cutler portrayed both Fred Phelps, known for his radical anti-gay beliefs, and Matthew Galloway, the bartender who saw Matthew Shepard's two killers speaking with him at the bar before his death. He said that he was drawn to the play because it gave both sides to Matthew Shepard's story and showed how families interact with "horrible people."

"To try to make people see



Photo by Al Vicedo

*Professor Michele D'Angelo-Long talks with freshmen Jennifer Cosby and Jarnae Carter about ways to prevent violence directed at minority groups at Tuesday's colloquy in the Bronc Diner.*

his perspective, his reasoning—to try to get inside his head is a scary, scary thing," said Cutler.

Junior Chad Schubert, also a cast member from the play, said that the play gives insight from every perspective, on issues from all sides.

"The show puts to the forefront both sides of homosexuality—both the pros and cons," said Schubert.

According to Cutler, the play is successful as a movement towards activism, with the interaction of characters on stage and non-fictionalized script, based on real accounts. The play not only promoted the idea for change, but also "tried to get the audience involved."

"It's not just gay rights, it's many things," he said. "There are certain problems in society that aren't getting fixed," he later added.

The forum also explored different forms of activism and raised the question of whether Judy Shepard's speaking to audiences worldwide was in itself a form of activism.

Cutler thought that her speeches were ways of educating and relating to the people.

"Judy Shepard is the first link to get people information about what's going on," he said.

"She's trying to spread the message of—just tolerance," Schubert added. "It's not just

her son; it's a person."

After the panel discussed the play, discussion groups among the audience, led by Michele D'Angelo-Long, adjunct instructor in the English Department, were formed and students and professors discussed ways to prevent violence generated not only towards the gay community, but also toward minorities and people in general. Discussion of laws and rights and their success in protecting people like Matthew Shepard also ensued.

"Go online—go find a cause. I urge everyone out there to go out and do something," said Cutler.

## New addition to Orientation will PHOCUS on health

By Jessica Decina

By next fall, Rider will add Peer Health On Campus Unites Students (PHOCUS) as a major part of September's orientation as well as the school's three awareness weeks.

Christine Carter, the coordinator for the New Student Resource Center and Orientation, believes PHOCUS will give a much-needed voice for students who try make good choices concerning their health.

"We're hoping that peers [of the PHOCUS staff] will promote healthy, responsible behavior to each other," Carter said. "I'm hoping to give these students a voice on campus."

The program is currently looking for five undergraduate students for its team.

These students would be a combination of the "O-Staff" and the "Improbable Players," an adult group that performed at Fall Opening. Although the "Improbable Players" delivered a powerful message through their real-life stories, Carter

feels an audience of students will relate better to a staff of people their own age.

"We had feedback from students and faculty after Fall Opening that indicated students wanted something to relate to," Carter said. "Although the material from *Improbable Players* was very effective, some students felt they were being talked down to."

PHOCUS' message would concentrate primarily on alcohol and the different behaviors to which it can relate. Carter said that alcohol connects with many different kinds of destructive behavior, including drunk driving, sexual assault, vandalism and even stress. For college students especially, alcohol is a topic that is too significant to ignore, she said.

Additionally, other goals include providing better resources for students interested in areas of nutrition, wellness and exercise. Carter hopes the group will "create a better niche" for Rider's three health-themed weeks: Alcohol Awareness Week, Safety Week

**'I'm hoping to give these students a voice on campus'**  
- Christine Carter

and Wellness Week.

"[PHOCUS] recognizes the need for student involvement in the theme weeks," Carter said. "We're hoping it will make us more visible on campus."

Having established the framework for the program, Carter has begun the search for the first PHOCUS group. Carter, along with Residence Life Director Jamiyl Mosley and Substance Abuse Counselor Corrine Zupko, will interview and select the final five.

After spring break, the team will be announced and those students will go to several meetings and a retreat, according to Carter. Most importantly, they will attend a one-day Peer Institute workshop at

The College of New Jersey over the summer, where they will become Bacchus-Gamma certified. This program will give them national certification as peer leaders, said Carter.

Members would then arrive to school in the fall a week early, to rehearse a skit for Fall Opening. They would perform the skit, which focuses on making responsible choices, for the class of 2009.

Carter has expanded her search all across campus in a short amount of time, talking to organizations with interests ranging from theater, psychology, sociology, women's health and student government. Because PHOCUS has such a wide range of wellness topics, Carter believes that a large number of students may have an interest in the program.

"We are looking for someone who is responsible, not afraid to act and who is committed to the theme weeks," said Carter. "We need students who feel strongly about wellness and strive to make healthy decisions."

## SECURITY BRIEFS

### Sisterhood

Members of a sorority were charged as a group with disorderly conduct. On Friday, Feb. 11 in the sorority lot, security was approached by two students, each from different sororities who alerted them that three cars were illegally blocking them in. The owners were contacted but there was no response. Two tow trucks were called to campus. Owners of two of the cars moved them but one remained in violation. Several minutes later, a female and about 20 members of her sorority arrived outside and began to yell at the security officers and the tow truck operator. She then had a verbal altercation with the tow truck operator as he towed her car. Lawrence Police Department (LPD) responded. The matter is still under investigation. Individual charges will be forthcoming.

### Persistence is a Virtue

An intoxicated male resident in Kroner got into a verbal argument with his roommate on Saturday, Feb. 12, at 12:24 a.m. They were separated by another male resident. Security was contacted and met with the suspect and his roommate. The suspect was argumentative, but then agreed to leave the room for the night. Ten minutes later, he returned and started acting disorderly. Security came back and determined that he had been drinking alcohol and was under the legal age. Two LPD officers arrived and instructed them to remain-separated for the night. The suspect was charged with failure to comply, disorderly conduct and an alcohol violation. The matter has been referred to the Office of Community Standards.

### Now That's Rejection

Security received a report of a firearm in a Switlik room on Saturday, Feb. 12, at 3:50 a.m. A male resident called, saying that a female resident told him that there were two armed male visitors in a room. LPD was immediately notified and four units and Security responded. They entered the room, LPD verified who they were and did a search that found no firearms. The female resident told Security she didn't want the male resident coming over, so she told him they had guns and were forcing her to comply. She was charged with reckless endangerment.

Information provided by the Director of Safety and Security, Vickie Weaver.