

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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CU joins in Condom Awareness Week

By Jacob Kramer

With the approach of Valentine's Day, warmer weather, and higher hormone levels, the co-sponsors of the fourth annual Condom Awareness Week are flooding the campus with latex.

"We're handing out millions of condoms," said Union Theological Seminary student and member of the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project (CGHAP) Macky Alston. "Mint condoms, colored condoms, and good old extra strength."

Tables on College Walk will supply condoms, literature, and flyers to students all week in an effort to connect Lovers' Day with safe sex.

“The whole idea is to practically throw [the condoms] in your face, and then you have no excuse,” said Stephanie Marks, BC '93, of Barnard/Columbia Students for Choice (BCSC).

“Everything is going great,” said Sara Chinn, a graduate student in the department of English and a member of CGHAP. “When we say ‘Do you want a condom for Valentine’s Day,’ a lot of people are being really receptive--it’s a cute gimmick.”

“People didn’t used to stop and talk with us or take a handful of condoms instead of just the one,” Alston said. “Now more people are doing that.”

The celebration is sponsored by CGHAP, BCSC, the University Health Services, the Office of Health Education, Women Oriented Women (WOW), and the Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Coalition (LBGC).

In addition to the handouts on College Walk, the celebration will feature a Valentine’s Day party in Ferris Booth Hall.

“There will be free food and drink, lots and lots of condoms, condom balloons--it will be just a condom festival,” Chinn said.

Chinn added that dental dams will be available at the party.

Goals of the event are to increase demands for safe sex, to demonstrate the support of Columbia organ-

izations for the national event, and to dispense information about the services which Columbia organizations offer.

“I think this country has got its head up its ass about sex,” said LBGC Co-chair Eliza Randall, BC '91, who is also a member of WOW. “The bottom line is condoms save lives. And people like Cardinal fucking O'Connor say that it's better for a man to infect his wife than to use a condom--that's murderous. I don't know what he's doing in bed, but it's obviously not very much.”

“If we can make people aware, we can change sex from this ooh-oooh ahh-ahh issue and bring it out into the open,” Randall added.

Coordinators agreed that although Columbia students generally know some facts about safe sex, they fail to use their knowledge when it matters.

“There's a gap between people knowing they should be using condoms or practicing safer sex and actually doing that,” said Leslie Kantor, program coordinator of sexuality programs for Health Services.

Though people have plenty of information, Alston said, there are also widespread inaccuracies about safe sex in the media.

“[There is] a lot of misinformation too, from the national press, who specialize in misinformation,” Alston said.

“Everybody thinks they know what's up with safe sex, but I think there's a lot of heterosexuals who don't use condoms, especially when the woman is on the pill...and especially at parties when they get drunk,” Alston added.

Chinn said she wanted students to know that Health Services offers counseling and treatment as well as HIV testing.

AIDS affects everyone, Randall said.

“We're all living with AIDS,” Randall said. “We may not all be carrying HIV, but we're all living with AIDS.”