

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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BC health awareness month begins

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Contributing Writer

Oct. 1 marked the beginning of the second annual Women's Health Month at Barnard College.

Centered around the theme "Nature and Nurture," the month-long programming should foster greater awareness of health issues among women, coordinators said.

"The goal of health month is to enable women to become empowered about their own health," said Peggy Wheat, director of Barnard Student Health Services.

"I think that 'Nature and Nurture' means getting to know yourself," Wheat added.

The diverse range of activities will include discussions of health issues such as reproductive rights, access to health care, and discussions about AIDS and alcohol abuse. Coordinators have even scheduled massages and aerobics classes as some of the month's activities.

"We want people to learn how to take care of their health, now and later on down the line," Wheat said.

Women's Health Month emerged from the combined efforts of Barnard organizations such as Student Health Services, Student Government Association, Career Services, and the Office of Disability Services.

To create the schedule of events, Barnard resident assistants submitted activity proposals to their resi-

dent directors. Other decisions about what to include were dictated by the priorities of Student Health Services, according to Wheat.

She added that the convergence of other health awareness programs also contributed to the month's agenda.

Women's Health Month will coincide with National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week and National Domestic Violence Week, and the issues of alcohol and domestic violence will be targeted in the month's discussions. Alcohol awareness in particular will receive extensive coverage in discussions and activities coordinated by student groups and resident assistants.

While discussing alcohol use and abuse in a community of mostly underage students is difficult without either condoning or encouraging its consumption, Wheat said it is necessary.

"Alcohol contributes to 10 percent of all deaths," she said. "Of course if someone walked up to me and asked, 'Should I do something illegal?' I'd tell them no. But I think we can endorse general health education without promoting or condoning specific behavior."

Discussions of anorexia and other eating disorders, which affect women in much higher proportions than men, breast implants, and the "beauty myth" are all scheduled for upcoming sessions.

Although Barnard is similar to a coeducational community because male students attend classes and live in dorms, Wheat said Women's Health Month should reflect

Barnard's focus on women's education.

Because time constraints did not allow for all issues to be discussed this year, Wheat said she will make an attempt to bring these topics into the spotlight next year.

She said she is already considering possible themes for next year, including that of health issues involving women of color.

Students said they were pleased there will be extensive discussion of women's health issues during the month.

"I had assumed before coming here that they would devote time to talking about women's health issues, and it's really nice to see my assumption proven correct," said Laoma Lee, BC '96.

"The wide range of topics that [the month will] have gives an opportunity to those students who have not had a chance to receive this kind of information on important subjects," said Antonia Fasanelli, BC '96.