



SCOTT MASON/The Winchester Star

Ben Weber (from left), Frederick County Sheriff Lenny Millholland, Philip Pate and Lee Braithwaite walk along the Loudoun Street Mall in high heels for the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraiser to benefit The Laurel Center on Saturday morning. More than \$7,000 was raised.

Men wear high heels to raise money, awareness

By CATHY KUEHNER
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Domestic violence and sexual assault are serious issues that shatter the lives of women, men and children. All too often, the violence occurs out of sight, behind closed doors. That's why almost 100 men stepped into high-heeled women's shoes on Saturday morning to stroll up and down the Loudoun Street Mall, attracting the attention of curious onlookers who stopped and asked, "Why the shoes?"

It was to call attention to domestic and sexual violence and raise money for The Laurel Center in Winchester, which aids survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families.

Leslie Hardesty, sexual assault program coordinator for The Laurel Center, said participants in Saturday's Walk a Mile in Her Shoes raised more than \$5,000, with another \$2,000 coming from event sponsors and last-minute gifts. All the money supports The Laurel Center.

This was the second year for the event.

"We want to call attention to violence against women," Winchester Sheriff Les Taylor said. "Whatever the number of violent and sexual assaults is each



We want to call attention to violence against women. Whatever the number of violent and sexual assaults is each year, it is always too high. One is too many.

— Les Taylor
Winchester sheriff

year, it is always too high. One is too many."

Taylor, who was walking in high-heeled red shoes, added, "I'm also doing this for my grandmother, who grew up with physical and mental abuse."

Lee Braithwaite, 70, missed last year's event because of work. He made sure he didn't miss it this year.

My mother was mentally abused by my stepfather, who made her feel worthless," said Braithwaite, who wore rainbow-colored sequin earrings to match his

See **Shoes**, Page **A7**

Shoes

from Page A6

rainbow-colored sequin shoes. He said he was walking for his mother and for every person, regardless of gender, who has been abused or assaulted in any way.

"Domestic violence affects everyone," Braithwaite said.

"I always support causes I believe in, and The Laurel Center is a really good cause," said Frederick County Sheriff Lenny Millholland. "I hope one day there won't be any domestic violence or sexual assaults."

Philip Pate, a Winchester-based psychologist who has worked with abused and battered women as well as with Child Protective Services, participated in the walk for the second year. "For professional and personal reasons, I feel strongly about supporting The Laurel Center.

"I recognize the need for safety, security and services for those who are abused," Pate continued. "We know abuse has serious, long-lasting effects, especially on children."

Winchester resident Barry Schnoor wore high-heeled red pumps for the second year, too. "I'm walking because I have women in my life who are important to me."

Big men need big shoes, and The Laurel Center had a table full from which the men could choose. Hardesty said some shoes were purchased from an online store for drag queens. Other shoes were donated and some men arrived with their own high heels.

While participants strolled the Loudoun Street Mall in high heels, event organizers carried the men's regular shoes and boots to the after-party at Brewbakers. The men were grateful to slip into their own shoes.

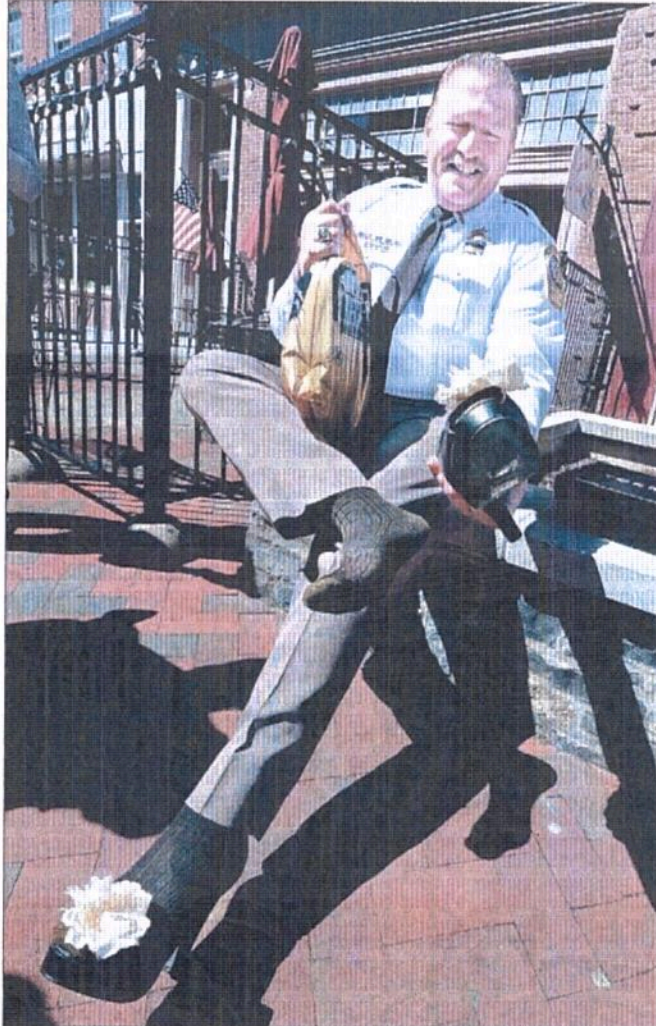
Awards were presented at Brewbakers, too.

Braithwaite was recognized as the individual who raised the most money, \$1,835. The team that raised the most money was the restaurant eM, with \$776.

Millholland won the "Prettiest in Shoes" award, and Trent Kingree won the "Most at Home in High Heels" award.

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: The International Men's March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault & Gender Violence was first organized in 2001 by Frank Baird, a family therapist and marriage counselor in Van Nuys, Calif.

A small group of men in heels tottering around a park quickly became a worldwide movement



SCOTT MASON/The Winchester Star

Frederick County Sheriff Lenny Millholland pulls off one of the high-heeled shoes he wore during the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraiser to benefit The Laurel Center in Winchester. About 100 men participated in the event. The Laurel Center aids victims of domestic and sexual violence and their families.

to support rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters and other sexual violence education, prevention and remediation programs.

The Laurel Center provides shelter, safety, resources and education to those in need in Winchester and Frederick, Clarke and Warren counties.

In March, The Winchester Star reported on the progress of The Laurel Center's new 22,500-square-foot building on North Cameron Street. The three-story structure will house the organization's administrative offices and provide 32 beds for women and their children who are seeking shelter. So far, the building's exterior has been built.

The project's total cost is more than \$5 million — \$3 mil-

lion for the groundwork and building the shell and \$2.1 million to complete the interior. The nonprofit organization hopes to raise an additional \$1 million to cover the costs of moving in, furniture, maintenance and playground equipment.

The Laurel Center's current 5,000-square-foot building has been used for 28 years and has only enough room to shelter 14 people at a time. The center serves almost 400 women a year with counseling, referral services and shelter. It sheltered 139 women and children in 2016, but had to turn away hundreds because of a lack of space.

Learn more at thelaurelcenter.org.

— Contact Cathy Kuehner at ckuehner@winchesterstar.com

Men in heels address gender stereotypes, assault

BY JACKIE PUGLISI
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — The clip-clop of women's shoes will echo through downtown Winchester this weekend when men slip on a pair of high heels to raise awareness of sexual assault.

For the second year, The Laurel Center Intervention for Domestic and Sexual Violence is holding Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: The International Men's March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault and Gender Violence event. The walk begins at noon on Saturday in Shenandoah University's Feltner Building parking lot at 9 Court St. Registration is at 11 a.m. During the walk, men will strut in women's shoes for one mile, which begins and ends at the Feltner Building. Women and children are also welcome to participate.

"It brings awareness that sexual violence does occur to women in all communities," said Cindy Marzullo, development director at The Laurel Center.

The event is held in correlation with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month in April.

The reason behind having a man walk a mile in high heels is to address the gender stereotype that women have to dress a certain way. Participants not able to walk in

heels may also wear women's flats or flip-flops. They also have the option to carry a sign supporting gender equality.

If a participant doesn't want to bring a pair of heels, shoes may be rented for \$5 at the walk.

It can be quite interesting to see men walking down the street in women's shoes, Marzullo said.

"[Last year] one gentleman was really tall, and he wore massive high heels," she said.

Several of the men who participated last year bought their own shoes, and many are doing the same again this year.

"It's just nice when people really jump on the bandwagon," Marzullo said. "We'll have some of the same participants this year, and we're excited about that."

After the event, participants will convene at Brewbaker's Restaurant for an after party and awards ceremony. There, prizes will be handed out to the individual and team who raised the most money, the person who seems the most at home in high heels and the person with the prettiest shoes. Participants will be given two drink tickets to use at Brewbaker's, and snacks will also be provided. A disc jockey will entertain the crowd.

Last year, the Laurel Center netted about \$5,000 and saw 80

participants. This year, the goal is to raise \$10,000. The money will go toward the center's operating fund and program costs.

The Laurel Center is a nonprofit organization that works to empower victims of domestic and sexual violence by providing emergency housing, advocacy, support services and education.

The registration fees for the walk are \$35 for adults, \$15 for college and high school students and \$150 for a team of five. Participants may register in advance or at the event.

This year, Marzullo said they are pushing for registrants to start a donor page because it tends to generate more interest and raise more funds for the event.

To register online, visit www.the-laurelcenter.org or the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes Fundraiser for The Laurel Center event page on Facebook.



The Laurel Center is holding an additional event for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. From 6 to 8 p.m. April 20 at Bright Box Theater, a free art show will feature works by sexual assault survivors who will share their stories.

— Contact Jackie Puglisi at
jpuglisi@winchesterstar.com
Follow on Twitter @LifeWinStar