Suicide Prevention Action Group | No More Secrets

On March 22, 2012, Howard University’s Suicide Prevention Action Group kicked off the first annual No More Secrets Awareness Concert with an outstanding response from students, organizations, and community supporters. SPAG’s Director Dr. Donna Holland Barnes assembled a team of staff, partners, and volunteers to address the growing concern about suicide on campus. Since 2002, there have been 5 Howard University students whom died by suicide, and there have also been numerous attempts on campus by students. Well aware of the role that depression, anxiety, and stress play in causing suicidal ideation, this event set out to open the dialogue about the secrets student are keeping which lead to these emotional states.

The Blackburn building’s forum room was filled to standing room capacity for the evening packed with performances and guest speakers. With the vision and creative organization of Zalika Cobb, Administrative Assistant, the line-up included 15 different acts who all took the stage in the name of breaking the stigma surrounding help seeking behavior. The over 200 audience members in attendance nurtured an atmosphere of support and empathy during the variety of presentations. Some of the performers including Howard University’s own captivating dance troupes Rampage and I Am We, the lyrical and profound spoken word of Ms. Kim & Yaaunw, Queen Gyre, who shared her revealing and healing poem Wake Up, and “America’s Got Talent” contestant and DC’s own multitalented singer/harpist Rashida Jones who sang her new single “Play My Heart.” The event’s guest speakers, Ed “Lyfe” Kittrell, Antoine Quichocho, and Tre’ona Kelty, all shared their overwhelming stories of personal triumph in the face of life’s most challenging trials and obstacles. Their honest and candid discourses interspersed throughout the event aided in moving several other audience members to open up about their own traumas and experiences by the close of the evening. In addition, “SPAG’s Wall Of Secrets”, created by Baye Harrell (communication specialist) was displayed outside of the performance room and featured over 50 anonymously submitted secrets from students. (Over 10 were received during the event itself!)

The night as a whole spoke to the demand for information, support, and a continuing dialogue about suicide and other societal taboos. For this reason, SPAG has decided to sustain its campaign of anonymous secret sharing by means of the No More Secrets drop boxes placed throughout campus dorms. In addition, SPAG is currently planning the return of the No More Secrets Awareness Concert for 2013. We are hopeful that these efforts and others will bring about much needed attention to the emotional and mental concerns which affect us all.

SPAG was joined by Active Minds, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc, Lady Diva Corporation, CASCADE, WHBC, 1LYFE, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, I.Am.We., Teens Against the Spread of Aids, R.A.M.P.A.G.E., HCUBuzz, and HBCUConnect.

We want to thank all the volunteers who helped with making this program a success.