

Advocate for sex assault victims helps make police training video

JANE DOE'S DUTY



ALEC JOHNSON REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Donna Palomba is Jane Doe No More, the victim of a 1993 rape, Palomba went on to found Jane Doe No More to improve the way society responds to sexual assault.

BY ALEC JOHNSON
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Donna Palomba has been working to improve how police treat victims of sexual assault and how they handle the investigation.

Now, the founder of Jane Doe No More and victim of a home invasion and rape, has a new tool.

In October, Palomba stood beside three chiefs of police from Connecticut and filmed and edited the professionally filmed and edited 'Duty Trumps Doubt,' to the International

Association of Chiefs of Police, in Orlando, Fla.

The dramat-

ic video tells the stories of victims of sexual assault and serves as a training piece for police officers and the public.

Fairfield Chief of Police Gary MacNamara said perhaps the most important lesson for police is that each case is different and each sexual assault incident is different.

"We are police officers every day," MacNamara said. "The person calling us, this might be the only time they have ever talked to a police officer. They may not be acting right or how we expect them to act. There is no victim's handbook."

Palomba, founded Jane Doe No More in 2007 and spent the last year working with vol-

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VIDEO: A new weapon in fight against rape

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unteers and producers, Richard and Didi Dobbs of Mom & Pop Films, to have the project complete by the Orlando meeting.

In the months since, "Duty Trumps Doubt" has caught on and has been viewed by police departments across the country. To date, 900 copies have been mailed to law enforcement at their request, free of charge.

Neil O'Leary, chief of the Wolcott police department and board member of Jane Doe No More, said they wanted to make a video police departments could use for roll call training. Those brief meetings before officers start their shifts is important training and a time "when you have the officers undivided attention," he said.

O'Leary said the most important lesson of the video is for officers to keep an open mind when interacting with victims, especially in the early stages of the investigation.

When officers respond victims are often in shock, confused or disoriented. "The 'primary focus of the video is to teach police officers that every victim should be treated individually,'" O'Leary said. "You can't come to any pre-drawn conclusions ... don't assume anything."

For 8 minutes and 46 seconds, a compilation of police officers dialogue mixed with harrowing anecdotes told by sexual assault victims, acts as a reminder to those who watch, that rape can happen to anyone.

"This is not a woman's issue," Palomba said. "This effects everyone."

Sexual assault victims, including a woman recounting being raped by her father as a 3-year-old, a man sexually assaulted by his cousin as a child and a woman who was bound, gagged and raped by a stranger, told their stories on camera.

Palomba, as the victim of a 1993 home invasion rape and subsequent botched investigation by the Waterbury police department, has made it her life's work to educate both police and the public to overcome the stigma associated with rape. That stigma, she said, often leads to re-victimization.

It was one month after she was raped in the middle of the night by a man who held a gun to her head, when police didn't believe her story because she told them she didn't wake her children. Palomba said she was on her way to healing, but instead was traumatized further by police who interrogated her.

"As a result I have post traumatic stress disorder for the rest of my life," she said. "It didn't have to happen that way."

In 2001, Palomba, now of Woodbury, successfully sued the Waterbury police department for negligence, and in 2007, told her story to the world on "Dateline."

Palomba compares the stig-

ma of being raped with that of having breast cancer 30 years ago. "It was taboo," she said. But that all changed when Betty Ford stepped forward and told the public she had breast cancer, she said. "Our goal is to do the same for sexual assault."

O'Leary, who is featured in the video, said he hopes this is the first of many videos that the organization will produce.

"We have to build credibility with the law enforcement community," he said. "'Duty Trumps Doubt' has been the impetus to build that collaboration with the community."

Palomba said her experience as a marketing executive helped during the creation of the video. She said the Dobbses, of Mom and Pop Films, used technology to "make something memorable."

Richard Dobbs is a former producer of "Law & Order" and he worked with Quinnipiac University students and staff in the school of communications to shoot and edit the video. All of the actors and the Dobbses worked for free on the project, which Jane Doe No More Executive Director Nora J. Martin, said cost \$10,000 when it could have cost \$250,000.

The organization is a non-profit and relies on donations.

Before shooting, Jane Doe No More surveyed police departments about how they trained for and dealt with rape. She said they found that much of their training came from books and the few videos available were outdated. "Many detectives told us, 'this is what not to do.'"

The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently asked for a copy and on Dec. 21, the organization is presenting the video to police departments in the greater Boston metropolitan area. "There is no doubt they will walk away with it," Palomba said.

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WHERE TO FIND JANE DOE NO MORE

On the web: Jane-DoeNoMore.org, info@jane-doenomore.org

Office: The Woman's Center, 450 Kinney Hall at Naugatuck Valley Community College, 750 Chase Parkway, Waterbury, (203) 575-8288

In the aftermath of two sexual assaults in the Thomaston and Watertown area, Jane Doe No More, which partners with the ESCAPE-ALIVE Survival Skills program, will be hosting free self-defense lessons on Jan. 29. The class will be taught by Drew and Daniele Serrano of East Coast Training Systems and will be in the Thomaston area. An exact location is yet to be determined.



DUTY TRUMPS DOUBT™

Jane Doe
No More

THE FACTS

- » One in 6 women and one in 33 men will be a victim of sexual assault.
 - » Every two minutes, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.
 - » An estimated 60 to 80 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to police.
 - » Factoring in unreported rape, of rapists will ever spend a day in prison.
 - » 15 of 16 rapists walk free in our country.
 - » Non-stranger rape represents 75 percent of all rape cases in the United States.
 - » College-aged women are four times more likely to be a victim of sexual assault.
- Source: *Jane Doe No More*