**Student Counseling Services Raises Awareness**

Oklahoma State University Student Counseling Services is kicking off Eating Disorder Awareness Week to inform students on the health dangers of eating disorders Monday.

Student Counseling Services has partnered with Share the W.E.A.L.T.H. and Seretean Wellness Center Registered Dietician Elizabeth Lohrman to make the week a success.

Events include a watch party, free online eating behavior screenings and an informational booth.

Tamara Richardson, senior clinical counselor at Student Counseling Services and a founding member of Oklahoma Eating Disorders Association, said she understands the importance of raising awareness.

“Eighty-six percent of [eating disorders] onset before age 20,” Richardson said. “It is an early-adult/adolescent illness.”

Damaris Pierce, a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority and a pageant contestant in Miss Oklahoma whose platform is eating disorder awareness, recognizes the value of being confident.

“I know what it feels like to want to look a certain way all the time,” Pierce said. “I know that my passion for [eating disorders] won’t recover someone from an eating disorder, but I do hope that my involvement on campus and in Oklahoma can prevent even just one person from crossing that fine line from a bad habit to an eating disorder.”

Oklahoma Eating Disorders Association, the third statewide organization of its kind in the nation, holds other events year-round.

As a founding member, Richardson has organized several educational presentations to different groups and classes across campus to raise awareness.

Student Counseling Services will host a body image group after the Eating Disorder Awareness Week on Thursdays for students to learn healthier ways of viewing themselves and their bodies, according to its Web site.

Stephanie Scott, a practicum intern at Student Counseling Center and a member on the planning committee for the week, hopes all her hard work pays off.

“It’s simply not a choice,” Scott said. “People like to think that ‘if she hadn’t have done this, this wouldn’t have happened,’ or the treatment is as simple as ‘she needs to eat’ when really sometimes the case it is as severe as a phobia or an addiction.”

Remissions and relapses occur in eating disorders just like alcoholism, Scott said.

The history of Eating Disorder Awareness Week on OSU campus is unknown but has been held annually for several years.

Students who believe they are suffering from an eating disorder or wish to seek counseling for any reason can schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services at any time.

Students can make an appointment by calling or visiting the Student Counseling Services office located at 316 Student Union.

All events are free and open to OSU and NOC students. A flyer with the week’s events can be found on the Student Counseling Services Web site.

Sources

Dr. Tamara Richardson, Ph.D., senior clinical counselor: 405-744-5472

Damaris Pierce, Miss Oklahoma pageant contestant whose platform is eating disorder awareness: 918-607-0800

Stephanie Scott, practicum intern at Student Counseling Services and was on planning committee for the event: 405-365-3921