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News:

Soldiers participate in sexual assault training

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Soldiers participated in the annual sexual assault training April 18 and 19 at Barlow Theater.

photograph by

Mike Domitrz, founder and executive director of The Date Safe Project used the "Can I Kiss You?" approach to make the training fun and interactive, according to Col. Christine Pacheco, Equal Opportunity program manager, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division.

"The way that he actually presents is more effective and better than having a PowerPoint presentation for the fact that he has interaction with the people," Pacheco said.

Domitrz said he believes humor is essential to breaking down the barrier of assumptions.

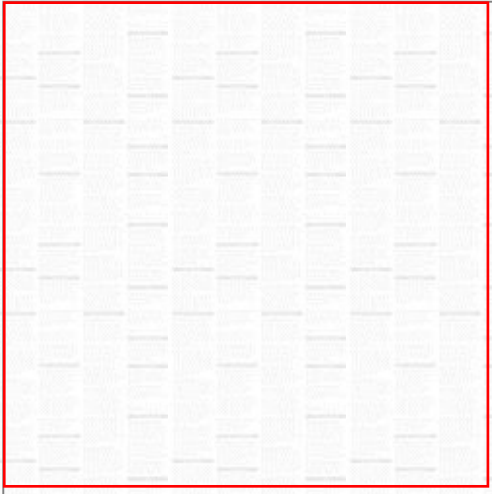
"When our audience walks in on sexual assault or sexual harassment (training), they have a huge presumption of what I'm going to say – statistics, that kind of information, that kind of data," he said. "I don't do any of that. So by starting with humor, we get to break down those barriers, really open their minds, and then they're willing to learn and potentially change their own behaviors."

Education is the key to helping prevent sexual assault, Pacheco said.

"It takes for us to educate and train our people, our Soldiers and our civilians, and the only way that we can do that is actually having something different other than a PowerPoint, having the capability of being able to bring people from other organizations to actually teach us some ways we can actually intervene and motivate people to combat sexual assault," she said.

Domitrz said he believes the military cares about addressing the issue of sexual assault and is assertive about it, with training required annually.

"If you look every year you have to go through training, and we can say that even our colleges don't have annual required training of their students on sexual assault, the military does," he said.



"So our military is very proactive in wanting to address this and bringing interactive, fun, potentially life changing programs to the men and women."

Audience members got involved with the presentation by volunteering as role players.

"I like participating. It makes it easier to actually get into what's going on in the presentation and also a personal investment in getting things off to a good start," said Staff Sgt. Frank McCaskill, 1st Infantry Division Band.

McCaskill said he received the reaffirmation of "because something isn't right, you don't have to just let it happen."

One thing Domitrz said is Soldiers are held to a higher standard, McCaskill said. Many times what happens is that a few bad apples spoil it for the rest, who are going about doing the right things most of the time.

"We, as Soldiers, need to keep that in mind and prevent others from going down that other path and 'don't be that guy' or 'don't be that girl,'" hesaid.

McCaskill has three daughters and said he doesn't want them to be confronted by the type of person who would try to take advantage of them.

"I certainly wouldn't want them to be in a position where they found themselves unfortunately on the bad side of a confrontation of that nature," McCaskill said.

During his hour-long presentation, Domitrz had three messages to share. The first was to step in when you see a person trying to take advantage of someone who's been drinking or is intoxicated.

“We call that how to be a friend for somebody,” Domitrz said.

The second message was how to open the door for those you love, so they can come forward if anybody ever does anything to them sexually or intimately against their will. The third message is how to verbally communicate with a partner and how to get consent whether single or married.

For more information, visit www.datesafeproject.org.

By Shandi Dix

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Mike Domitrz, founder, The Date Safe Project, right, talks to Soldiers April 20 at Barlow Theater about sexual assault. Domitrz uses the “Can I Kiss You?” approach in his talks to military, civilians and teens.
