**By Lee Bickford and Betsy Danforth**

Finally--VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) Passes, 2013

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 was signed into law by President Clinton, providing $1.6 billion for the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, through the Office on Violence Against Women within the U.S. Department of Justice. VAWA was originally drafted by then-Senator Joseph Biden and a broad coalition of advocacy groups. The act provides many important victim’s advocacy and rehabilitation programs, such as:

* Establishment of a National Domestic Abuse Hotline, which responds to over 22,000 calls each month,
* Community violence and stalking deterrence programs,
* Funding for victim assistance,
* Enforcement in ALL jurisdictions of restraining orders against attackers,
* Federal “rape shield law,” which protects victims from having their past sexual conduct used against them in a rape trial,
* Programs to assist and protect violence victims of different ethnicities,
* Services for victims with disabilities,
* Legal aid for domestic violence survivors,
* Specific support for Native tribes to decrease dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking against Native women.

The act was passed in Congress with bipartisan support in 1994. Congress reauthorized it in 2000 and again in 2005. In 2011, the law expired.

So why were we hearing so much about the opposition when VAWA was up for renewal in 2012? Conservatives ostensibly opposed the additions of protections for same sex couples, and provisions for undocumented victims of battery to obtain temporary visas while they seek refuge from further assault. As a result, House Republicans drafted a counter measure that omits protections and provisions for LGBTQ individuals, Native Americans living on reservations, and undocumented persons. Due to the polarity of the two bills, the VAWA’s fate remained unclear. However, in February 2013, the Senate’s expanded, inclusive extension of the VAWA was passed in both the Senate (78-22) and the House (286-138).

There are several reasons those additional provisions are important for victims of violence and their families: domestic violence happens in both heterosexual *and* homosexual relationships; and Native American women in abusive relationships with non-native partners face the inability to seek protection and justice in tribal courts, because non-tribal offenders are under Federal jurisdiction. In addition, abusive partners of undocumented immigrants often threaten victims with deportation should the victim contact authorities for help. The fact is *every* victim of domestic violence and sexual assault deserves advocacy and protection, and the passage of the expanded VAWA is indeed a victory for all of us who work with, and raise awareness about, victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

**2013 Student of Achievement Award Recipients**

***The Women’s Center is proud to highlight thirteen students who have enriched our campus through their hard work, team spirit, community activism, and leadership. We are honored to have an opportunity to recognize each of these students who have contributed much to Montana State University. The following is a* very *incomplete list of their activities and accomplishments.***

***Thanks to each one of you and the best of luck to you upon graduation!***

**Hannah Arm** is from Brookline, Massachusetts, and will graduate in May with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Hannah currently serves at MSU on the Women in Engineering Advisory Board and with Engineering Ambassadors, but her interests are diverse as she is also on the board of the Bozeman Bike Kitchen and works with the Bozeman Ice Festival.She is a member of the Tau Beta and Pi Tau honors societies, and is an Award for Excellence and Undergraduate Scholars Program recipient. Upon graduation, Hannah will move to Seattle where she has accepted a position with Boeing. She states: “I believe as a female engineer, I am more than just my career, and that **I have the opportunity to mentor other women interested in engineering.”**

**Chelsea Guenette** is from Issaquah, Washington, and will graduate in December with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. She has organized numerous events, including booths for both the Engineerathon and Catapalooza, and served as a referee at the first LEGO League Montana Championship. Her experience as president of the MSU Society of Women Engineers as well as her role as the activities coordinator, have given Chelsea opportunities to develop special team and leadership skills; but she also finds it important to offer these same opportunities to the younger officers in the organization. As Chelsea points out, **it is rewarding to watch and help younger women find the confidence and ability in themselves** she already knew they had.

**Mary “Emmy” Harvey** is from Idaho Falls, Idaho. She is majoring in Economics and will graduate in May. Emmy serves as the Executive Chair of Sustained Dialogue, and is an MSU Leadership Fellow, a member of the Network of Environmentally Conscious Organizations (NECO), and a volunteer for the Diversity Awareness Office. She was awarded the Western Undergraduate Exchange Merit Scholarship and is a Mentoring Gifted Children mentor. Emmy was a VOICE (Victim Options in the Campus Environment) Center “Faces” project leader, a Sustained Dialogue moderator, and coordinator for “De-Stereotype Me” Day. Emmy also serves as the liaison between NECO and the Bozeman Community Food Co-Op. Her studies in Economics and her participation in Sustained Dialogue have generated **a strong desire to examine and integrate societal issues that are under-addressed in academia.**

**Sabre Moore** is from Wright, Wyoming, and will graduate in May with a major in History and minors in Museum Studies, Native American Studies, and English Literature. Sabre volunteers as a Child Advance Project (CAP) mentor, an Eagle Mount ski instructor, a Museum of the Rockies Living Histories Interpreter, and Gallatin County Historical Society photographer. She has served as Managing Editor of the *Exponent* and Exhibit Designer for Native American Collections at Carter County Museum. She has received numerous scholarships-- including the Erma Lessel Collins Senior Woman Award--and is an Honors student who will graduate with distinction. Her experiences are broad, ranging from volunteering at a women’s shelter in Morocco, to writing a published young adult fiction book, to displaying her photographs in the “Upheaval” exhibit. Her plans include pursuing a graduate degree in museum studies or history, continuing her involvement with her family’s Wyoming farm, and earning her private pilot’s license.

**Merrill “Molly” Anne Oakley** is from Spokane, Washington. She will graduate in May with a double major in Cell Biology Neuroscience and Nutrition Sciences. Molly is currently a Victim Options in the Campus Environment (VOICE) Center advocate, a Women and Children’s Free Restaurant Writer, and a long-distance cyclist for charitable events. She is a member of the MSU cycling club, and the Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority. Molly has received a WUE scholarship and has completed research in both biochemistry and psychology on the topics of eating disorders and obesity. After graduation, she will head to the east coast to attend graduate school at Yale’s School of Nursing to become a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner.

**Bronwyn Rolph** is from Seattle, Washington, and will graduate in December with a double major in Civil Engineering, and French and Francophone Studies. She has been very active with Engineers Without Borders, as well as Engineering Ambassadors and French Club. Bronwyn spent her Spring break on a service learning trip with Professor Ada Giusti in Morocco where the group taught French, English, and basic computer skills to the local leaders of the Zawiya Ahansal region. Bronwyn notes that, **“learning a language has caused me to think more critically about how we talk and act, and the many different ways these actions can be interpreted.”** This awareness will undoubtedly serve Bronwyn well as she travels the world as a teacher and problem-solver between varying cultures.

**Tia Rooney** is from Great Falls, Montana, and will graduate in May with a major in Political Science and minors in English Literature and Leadership Fellows. Tia has served as a Resident Advisor and earned both Regional and National Advisor awards. She was teaching assistant for a Cross-Cultural Leadership class, and completed internships as a marketing assistant and a quality and risk management assistant for Bozeman Deaconess Hospital. Tia has worked for the past five years in the health care sector as a Certified Nurse’s Assistant, and has a strong interest in community service. Her plans after graduation include joining the Peace Corps, **in hopes of working in a women’s health clinic in Africa, or for an organization “promoting the awareness of sexual safety and HIV/AIDS.”**

**Else Trygstad-Burke** is from Bozeman and is a senior in History with a minor in Art History who will graduate in May. She volunteers as the Annual Adjudicator for the Bozeman Optimist Festival, and is involved with the Bozeman Symphony, the Intermountain Opera, Main Street Dance Theatre, the MSU *Exponent* and serves as a CAP Mentor. Else won the 2013 Montana Symphony Association’s College Division Competition and has appeared on the College of Arts and Architecture Dean’s list, the President’s list, and the MSU Honor Roll. Her experience in public schools has inspired her to effect more supportive and positive environments for students through educational reform. Her goal after graduation is to gain experience working in a Montessori-type school, so she can eventually **establish a private school with a nurturing, friendly environment,** and find scholarship funding for those students struggling in public schools-- especially those from lower socio-economic families.

**Hannah Wahlert** is from Lakeside, Montana, and will graduate in May with a Political Science / Political Institutions Major. She volunteers as a VOICE Center advocate and peer educator, a Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA) educator, and the VOICE Center Campaign Coordinator. Hannah is the current president of Students for Choice, and a member of the Political Theory Consortium. She received a grant from the Undergraduate Scholars program to create an LGBTQ Climate survey and business plan, and has served on the LGBTQ Advisory Board. Hannah was a campus organizer for NARAL Pro-Choice Montana, and completed an internship with the American Civil Liberties Union. Hannah has accepted a job as the community education specialist with HAVEN and the Bozeman Help Center. Ultimately, she would like to **pursue a career working towards social justice as an advocate for the many oppressed segments of society**.

**Katelyn Weber** is from Kalispell, Montana and will graduate in May with a degree in Mathematical Sciences. Katelyn is a member of the MSU Mathematics Club, and volunteers for Expanding Your Horizons and the Conference for Middle School Girls Interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Katelyn was awarded the Walker Scholarship and the Mathematical Sciences Department outstanding Scholar award. She also served as vice president of Students for Choice, and co-created a display for the Tunnel of Oppression. She completed two internships for the US Department of Commerce, and led an undergraduate team studying research methods of campus climate for LGBTQ students. After graduation, she will begin pursuing a graduate degree in Statistics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. It is Katie’s hope that her education will “one day lead to meaningful and influential research in areas that **will have a global impact and ultimately better the lives of others.”**

**Lisa Woerlein** is from Missoula, Montana. She graduates in December with a major in Civil Engineering and minors in Spanish and University Honors. Her volunteer interests center on environmental efforts, such as park restoration for the National Public Parks Day, and grizzly bear tracking and research in the Teton Range with Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation. Lisa served as president of the student chapter of the American Society for Civil Engineers, which enabled her participation in a leadership conference on fundraising and community involvement. She received a grant from the National Science Foundation to conduct research on environmentally friendly concrete. Lisa received the Olive Pearce Foundation scholarship, the Martin-Moss scholarship, and appeared on both the Dean’s list and the President’s list. She plans to attend graduate school and eventually create a career in the “smart-structures” area of engineering, **focusing on sustainable building and the use of reclaimed and renewable materials.** **Esther Yoon** is from Bozeman, and will graduate in May with a degree in Cell Biology / Neuroscience and minors in Leadership Fellows and University Honors. She volunteers as a Clinical Assistant at BridgerCare, as a mentor for the Gifted/PEAKS mentoring program, and as a pianist for the Korean Church of Bozeman. Esther is a member of Alpha Omicron Pi Women’s Fraternity, Mortar Board, AdvoCats, and E-Cats. She has received numerous awards, including MSU Alumni Foundation and Bozeman Chamber of Commerce Award for Excellence, the Swingle Memorial Scholarship, and an INBRE internship. She is an Expanding Your Horizons group leader, a Texts and Critics fellow, and she is co-writing an article on the perceptions of digital signage technology in WIC waiting rooms. Esther’s immediate plans include working for the National Institute of Health, earning her master’s degree in Public Health, or traveling abroad for a year to teach English in South Korea.

**Michael Brent Zundel** is from Billings Montana, and will graduate in May with a major in the Bio-Resources Option of Civil Engineering and minors in Latin American and Latino Studies, and the International Engineering Certificate program. He volunteers as Engineering Ambassador for the College of Engineering, and serves as an Opinion Editor, Opinion Columnist, Humor Satirist, and Photographer for MSU’s *Exponent.* He is also a student tutor for the Office of Student Success, and a member of Engineers Without Borders. Brent received the Torlief Aasheim Student Community Involvement Award, the MSU Award for Excellence, and the MSU Presidential Scholarship, and he has appeared on both the Dean’s list and the President’s list. He interned with the Idaho National Laboratory and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and was a volunteer Instructor for “English Opens Doors” in Valdivia, Chile. Brent **“hopes to actively bend the arc of history toward justice.”**

We say, **amen** TO THAT!

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30 terrific years

of the Montana State University Women’s Center by making a donation to help with our programming efforts, presenting a Sack Lunch Seminar, volunteering, or stopping by to say hello and brainstorm ideas for future events! This is YOUR Women’s Center, so get involved!



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