

They're walking for community resilience

October 16, 2019



In a parade of purple chalk, walkers young and old strolled through the roads of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation's reservation to promote resilience and community during domestic violence and sexual assault awareness month on Saturday, October 12.

"Most of us have been touched by [domestic violence] in one way or another. You create the space, people will come together and be able to be supportive of each other," said Jamie Maynard, one of the event organizers.

The event featured a 3k walk with white t-shirts and chalk and then a mini carnival-like after party. The organizers felt that providing a time for people to commune and play together promotes healing.

"Our approach to [domestic violence awareness] is something that we see happening nationwide which is drawing more of a focus towards wellness, healing and strengthening your family ties, your community, your resilience rather than so much your victimization," said Constance Athayde, manager of the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Prevention Program.

Around 200 people arrived at 10 a.m. to walk the 3k distance with their families and friends. As they walked, they sprinkled chalk on each other's white shirts provided by the organizers. When they finished, they visited the booths lining the street to gather resources and enjoy activities.

As the outreach specialist for the program, Maynard had been planning the walk since last year's successful event.

Growing up in Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Maynard knows how to plan an event. So when her supervisors told her to plan something for domestic violence awareness month, she went all out. Last year, they had 11 stations that they ran by themselves with games and resources.

This year, to make things a little easier, Maynard reached out to other advocates, inviting them to host their own booths at the event, such as volunteers from the Brookings chapter of A21, an anti-human trafficking organization.

"My job is going out and spreading the word and getting our program services information to the people that need those services," Maynard said. "I go out, and I table at events with most of these people. So this year we were able to open it up for them to come and table with us."

They also had a rock painting booth to serve as art therapy, and at noon, they served Indian tacos to those who had walked, serving the elders first in Native American fashion.

For the organizers, this event means more than a walk, although they love promoting walking through the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation's scenery. It meant coming together to heal and celebrating resilience.

"We all have had different things happen in our lives, but how is it that we've been resilient," Athayde said.

Maynard, a survivor of domestic violence, put her energy into the event because she wants to provide a place for people to heal and feel safe, saying she did not find events like this when she was in trouble.

"The sense of having community and support is huge for helping people get past what they have been through and heal from it," Maynard said. "It gives people who have been through the traumas some place to go to be happy and celebrate."