

# Officer tells how to deal with rape

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by her name and make her feel like a person again, not something that's used and discarded."

The court situation does involve some theatrics, she admits, but new laws have removed the defense attorney's right to question the victim about her past sexual life.

"Our circuit court judges show respect for the women," she says. "I go through what she can expect in court and tell her that anything she tells us isn't hurt her."

If a rape victim was under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the attack, it's better for the prosecution to be aware of the fact.

"People can accept the fact that she made a mistake," she says, although she admits that juries, while most rape defendants request, aren't always sympathetic to rape victims.

"Some people think if a girl is hitch-hiking, she deserves what she gets," she adds; but she believes the new laws are a step in the right direction to curbing that sentiment.

Rape victims, as well as armed robbery victims, are given polygraph tests as a matter of policy in Farmington Hills. Although the test results cannot be used in court, they often are used to convince a defense attorney that he's barking up the wrong tree.

"Sometimes, the first thing the defense attorney is going to try is to say 'Yes, they had sex, but she was willing, after that she changed her mind.' The polygraph test can show otherwise."

IN ADDITION to preparing the victim for court and gathering all the evidence, Ms. Harris refers the victims



LINDA HARRIS

to the Oakland County Crisis Center for rape victims or the Southfield Human Resources Center.

And even if the woman doesn't want to prosecute, information about a case may be helpful in successfully prosecuting another case which may have involved the same assailant.

Ms. Harris says her job has been made a lot simpler because of the two-year-old Michigan Criminal Sexual Conduct Code.

"It eliminates a lot of technicalities," she says. The code defines four degrees of sexual misconduct. First degree usually involves the use of a weapon; an attack on a child; gang rape or when severe injury results from the act. A fourth degree assault might involve molestation through the victim's clothes without the use of a weapon.

Statutory rape involves the willing participation of a victim under the age of 13. Both males and females can be prosecuted for statutory rape if their partner is under the age of 16.

"You can prosecute the girl, too, under this code," she says.

ORDINARY SECURITY precautions can prevent a possible rape, she adds.

"People don't pay attention, which is causing them to be attacked or robbed," she explains. Searching for keys in a handbag or leaving your doors unlocked often invites trouble.

"I keep on giving that message to anyone who'll sit still to hear it," Ms. Harris says. A slide presentation, "Self Protection for Women" is available through the Farmington Hills police department for showings to community groups.

## Cathy Jones endorsed by district committee

Cathy Jones, a candidate for the Farmington Hills City Council, has been endorsed by the 17th Congressional District Republican Committee.

It is the first time the committee has ever endorsed a candidate for a primary.

She has also been endorsed by the Farmington Democratic Club, which followed a Candidates Night Meeting held this month.

Ms. Jones has been teaching in the Farmington Elementary School System for the past six years.

The primary election is scheduled for Aug. 2.

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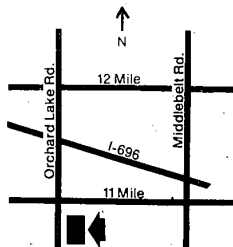
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