



Chip Scheuer

Sculptress Julie Fritsch is one of the artists whose work will be displayed at a show sponsored by the commission to prevent violence against women.

Domestic violence: getting the word out — creatively

By KATHY SALAMON
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As staff coordinator for the Santa Cruz Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, Susan Strehlow had to come up with a way to educate the public on the issue of domestic violence.

Forget pamphlets and press releases. Strehlow wanted to do things the Santa Cruz way — creatively.

"I just called up community leaders who deal with domestic violence," she said. "I said I wanted to discuss ways of educating the public on domestic violence in a creative way."

The outcome of that meeting was a decision to hold a contest so that local residents could portray the issue of domestic violence through sculpture, painting, poetry and music.

Tomorrow night, the semi-finalists will perform at the Veterans Hall Auditorium on Front Street.

But a "variety show" on domestic violence?

"We're not saying domestic violence is a humorous subject," Strehlow said. "It's another way of educating people about domestic violence. We're not taking it lightly at all."

The commission's quest apparently struck a chord with the Santa Cruz community. Many local artisans applied to be in the show, and the product tomorrow will include 24 performing arts acts and the works of eight visual artists.

"We feel very strongly about the issue of domestic violence," said Lindsay Clare, a member of the band called "Women from Hell" which will be performing tomorrow.

"We like to do fun rock 'n'

roll, but we also want to do some serious stuff that affects us as women," she said. "We're happy the forum exists so we can do that."

"Women from Hell" will perform a piece called "Vicious Cycle" that describes the ups and downs of women in rocky relationships.

The issue of domestic violence hits even closer to home for performer Karen Hinton.

Hinton, who said she spent 18 years as the wife of a violent husband, wrote poetry throughout her experience.

Tomorrow, she will read one of her poems entitled "Remember," which she wrote toward the end of her marriage.

"It's about the feelings of a family being shattered," she said.

Although violence is not mentioned in the poem, Hinton said that "beatings and violence are underlying themes throughout the poem."

"I get upset every time I read this poem," she said. "I'm going through the divorce right now and trying to get my life back together. My therapist thought this would be good for me."

Hinton said she hopes the show will help other women in abusive situations.

"When I was first being battered, there were no shelters to go to. Now there are shelters and things are a little better," she said. "But we still need to come out in the open about this. We need to talk about it and to face it."

"I'd like to see some other women not waste 18 years of their lives like I did of mine," Hinton said.

The show begins at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Veterans Hall Auditorium on Front Street. Tickets are \$3.