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# Students Seek to “Boost” Self-Esteem

Feb. 24, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—Students at Illinois Wesleyan University got a “boost” this week by participating in a variety of activities designed to enhance their self-esteem.

Organized by S.O.C.A. (Students Organizing Campus Awareness), a peer group devoted to promoting health education across campus, “BOOST Week” is an annual event designed to spread awareness of the importance of high self-esteem and positive body image.

“Self-esteem protects you from stress and anxiety,” said Christina Armstrong, staff counselor/outreach coordinator at Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) at Illinois Wesleyan. “Working with students, I find that self-esteem is a huge part of their mental health and overall well being.”

“BOOST Week” is organized in conjunction with National Eating Disorder Awareness (NEDA) Week. Through playful activities such as smashing bathroom scales and eating guilt-free “Confidence Cookies,” organizers hoped to spread a serious message. “I’m hoping that we can educate more students about BOOST week and the dangers of eating disorders,” said Quinn Darby ’20, a member of S.O.C.A. “I want to let students know that if they suffer from an eating disorder themselves, or think their friend is, there is someone they can talk to, and they don’t have to go through it alone.”

Jasmine White ’20, a participant in Thursday’s scale-smashing event, said it was a relief to smash the scale. White said that she had recently been looking for a scale to weigh herself because she has always worried about her weight, but after swinging the mallet more than 10 times, she said she no longer felt the need to weigh herself. “People cannot be held down by a simple number,” noted Darby. “A number can’t define them.”



Jasmine White '20 gleefully smashed a scale to symbolize it no longer has a hold on her thinking.



Allie Torres '13 told students their bodies “are already perfect when they can do things like walk, breathe and cry.”

BOOST Week’s featured speaker, Allie Torres ’13 is a community educator for the National Eating Disorders Association and a recovery mentor and community educator with the Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders. In a Thursday night presentation at Hansen Student Center, Torres told students she has struggled with an eating disorder since she was 15. One in 200 women in the United States has an eating disorder, said Torres. Noting that eating disorders are complex conditions arising from a combination of long-standing behavioral, biological, emotional, psychological, interpersonal and social factors, Torres noted “there is no magic bullet” for eating disorder recovery.

“I honestly wish I could tell you the answer in how to be better overnight,” said Torres, who described her own journey to recovery as “up and down and sideways and all over the place.” She is also the creator of Skin Deep, an initiative seeking to combat and create awareness for people with eating disorders.

Torres suggested the first step to recovery is to talk to someone about a problem you think you have or that a friend or loved one may be suffering from. She noted there are two support groups in the Bloomington-Normal area; in addition, counseling and services

for disordered eating is one of the many areas of concern for which students may seek assistance at IWU’s [Counseling and Consultation Services](#).

“Let’s also change the way we think about our bodies,” Torres said. “Less as something to be looked at or photographed so we can hang a picture in the hallway, and more as something that can walk, that can breathe, that can blink, that can cry. Take stock of all the things your body can do and that you’re grateful for, and think less of it as something to be changed or made perfect. It is already perfect when it can do things for you.”

By Vi Kakares '20

