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200 STUDENTS FROM OVER 20 COLLEGES DISCUSS HAZING, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE & THE HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY RAPE CASE FOR A 2-DAY COLLEGE SHOW SPECIAL

'THE STEVE WILKOS SHOW': Thursday, February 11 & Friday, February 12 on The CW Twin Cities at 9am.

STAMFORD, CT – February 8, 2010 – On Thursday, February 11 and Friday, February 12, NBC Universal Domestic Television Distribution's **THE STEVE WILKOS SHOW** hosts 200 students from over 20 colleges for its first-ever College Show.

Topics cover hazing, physical and emotional abuse, and an interview with three young men who were accused of participating in a rape incident that shook Hofstra University's Long Island campus last fall.

The show features a town hall format, allowing students to step up and voice their opinions on each segment's subject matter.

Special guest Debbie Smith from Pleasant Hill, California, whose son, Matthew Carrington, died from a hazing incident at Chico State University five years ago, tells her story and the details surrounding Matt's final moments.

Carrington, a fraternity pledge, was forced to participate in a binge water-drinking ritual that led to his death.

"He drowned from the inside out," says Smith. "It was like his brain exploded."

As she recalls the horrific experience, she offers words of advice to the college audience, the majority of which are involved in their schools' Greek life.

"Don't let anybody make you feel like you're less than what you are," she says. "Don't be afraid to say 'no.'"

According to HazingPrevention.org, there has been at least one hazing-related death on a college campus each year since 1970.

The show transitions when Wilkos invites Jesus Ortiz, Arvin Rivera and Stalin Felipe to the stage. These three young men were initially accused of participating in a rape at Hofstra University. The story captured national headlines.

"Everything was a lie," says Ortiz. "I was put like a monster out there."

Days after the incident, the charges against the boys were eventually dropped after a telephone video proved that the sexual act was consensual. The woman then recanted her story.

Despite proof of their innocence, the men say that their images continue to be tarnished.

“In a matter of five minutes, it killed my whole life,” says Rivera.

Ortiz, Rivera and Felipe say that they attempt to live normal lives. Unfortunately, they say that the event has hindered them from engaging in activities such as baseball and getting a job.

“I think it’s courageous for you guys to come out here and share your story,” says Wilkos. “That can not be an easy thing.”

Wilkos also speaks to Caitlin McDonald from Hagerstown, Maryland, a student who has taken a job as a stripper to help pay her tuition. Her boyfriend, Mike Schrack, has been both physically and emotionally abusive since the start of her job.

Despite the controversy surrounding McDonald’s decision, Wilkos sheds light on the issue that he finds most disturbing.

“The first time a guy puts his hands on you, don’t ever let him do it again!” he says.

Shockingly, the Bureau of Justice reports that women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest per capita rates of intimate partner violence--nearly 20 per 1000 women.

Students in the audience represent the following schools: St. John's University, Rutgers-Newark College, Pace University, Iona College, University of Connecticut, New Jersey City University, Temple University, Northeastern University, University of New Haven, Hofstra University, University of Connecticut – Stamford, Penn State, Brooklyn College, Western Connecticut State, Fordham University, University of Hartford, Purchase College, Fairfield University, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, Rutgers University, among others.

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