

Green Dot Day Spreads Awareness that Violence is Never Okay



Oct. 3 was Green Dot Day at WCU. In front of Sykes Student Union and on the grassy lawn of Killinger, students loped about in huge inflatable bubble balls. Others snagged sunglasses, soft pretzels, candy and other giveaways. But when they had their fill of fun and freebies, most students also stopped to talk with the volunteers who were staffing the event.

Volunteers like Michael Trivelis, a junior who was representing his fraternity, Alpha Tau Omega, and who was eager to explain

to passersby what the Green Dot program is all about.

“Green Dot believes that bystanders are the key to reducing sexual assault and other forms of violence on campus,” says Trivelis. “Red dots represent sexual assaults or other acts of power-based personal violence; Green Dots are actions that interrupt and stop Red Dots from happening. I was trained in the Green Dot program in my sophomore year as part of my RA training.”

“I think Green Dot is an amazing movement to help bring an end to Red Dot situations on and off campus,” he adds. “Whether it is something as extreme as stopping an act of sexual assault, giving someone medical attention or just calling public safety, we as students can make a difference.”

Since being introduced at WCU in 2015, Green Dot has reached more than 400 students and close to 200 staff and faculty via intensive, six-hour training programs. Additionally, more than 1,000 students have attended shorter, overview presentations.

Green Dot is meeting a critical need for an issue that impacts virtually everyone in the WCU community. Dr. Erin Hurt, an associate professor of English and a Green Dot trainer, notes that during training sessions, people are asked to confidentially share if they know someone who has been affected by power-based acts of violence. Consistently, 90 percent of the respondents report that they do.

“Green Dot gives us a way to be more involved -- no one is expected to solve this problem on their own, but for things to change, we all have to do something,” says Hurt.

Michael Salomone, a resident assistant in The Villages and vice president of Alpha Tau Omega, also volunteered his time for Green Dot Day. He says the training he received has given him more confidence to deal with conflict related to sexual violence.

“It is a difficult crime to combat, but this training has opened my eyes to new methods of dealing with it,” says Salomone. “The training benefited me by increasing my understanding of sexual violence and equipping me with different strategies.”

He has earned Green Dots by spreading awareness in every way he can think of, from flyers on resident hall bulletin boards to helping to set up Green Dot training for the 20 new members who joined Alpha Tau Omega this fall. “This is a new tradition that is here to stay for future new member classes,” he says.

Salomone has not yet been in a situation that required action but Trivelis has, and that’s when his Green Dot training kicked in.

“I have personally turned a Red Dot situation into a Green Dot. One night off campus, I noticed a student who needed immediate medical attention,” says Trivelis. “Instead of hoping someone else would take care of the situation, I called 911 and stayed with the student until help arrived. If it weren't for the training sessions Green Dot provided, I am not sure if I would have been able to handle the situation as effectively.”

The next faculty and staff Green Dot training will be held Dec. 13 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. To register, or for more information about Green Dot, go to http://www.wcupa.edu/_services/greenDot/ or email greendot@wcupa.edu.