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Center Against Sexual Assault, Prominent Local Men Launch Violence-Prevention Effort

University of Arizona Head Coaches Lute Olson and Mike Stoops, Pima County Board of Supervisors Chair Richard Elias, Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup, Tucson Police Chief Richard Miranda, Pima Community College Chancellor Roy Flores and Vice Chair of the Tohono O'Odham Nation Ned Norris are among 55 prominent local leaders throwing their weight behind a new program at the Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault aimed at ending men's violence against women.

The Men's Anti-Violence Partnership of Southern Arizona has 55 Founding Members – all prominent male business, community and government leaders. These men were motivated to join for many reasons, including the facts that one-third of girls younger than age 18 are sexually abused and one out of every six adult women is raped. The majority of this violence against women and girls is committed by men, but most men are not violent.

Introducing the Partnership, Center Against Sexual Assault board member Ime Archibong said, "The Men's Anti-Violence Partnership of Southern Arizona is a giant step forward in the prevention of sexual violence and domestic violence. Building on past community achievements, it engages men as part of the solution instead of blaming them for being the problem." Board member Rafael Guerrero continued, "We're working with some of the most well-known and respected men in our community to drive home the message that violence against women and girls is not OK and won't be tolerated."

In his remarks, UA basketball head coach Olson stated, "I've worked with a lot of champions in my time, and I know that real champions don't shy away from a challenge...If I can do anything to make our community a safer place, I'm going to do it." He added that when these young men leave the University, whether it is for the NBA, to teach, to sell cars or to practice law or medicine, they represent this basketball program and this University.

UA football head coach Stoops echoed the importance of more men standing up against violence. "Athletes are usually the first group that gets blamed for violence, but guys from every walk of life commit violence against women and girls...I'm encouraging my players to stand with me to end violence against women and girls."

Pima County Board of Supervisors Chairman Richard Elias said the county “is committed to standing up for victims of sexual violence to ensure they have help, trust and understanding.” He added, “The prevention of these ugly crimes is every bit as important as proper treatment, and that is the aim of the Men’s Anti-Violence Partnership.”

Mayor Walkup touted his founding during his first term of the group Tucson Men Against Domestic Violence, which has been folded into the Men’s Anti-Violence Partnership. Walkup said, “The City Council and I do not tolerate violence against women. I am proud of the work the Mayor’s Office and the City Council have done to date. We now have more police officers arresting perpetrators, investigating cases and preventing violence against women in Tucson.”

Chief Miranda talked about a different way of addressing the problems of sexual and domestic violence when he said, “We cannot just arrest away the problem of sexual and domestic violence; we need to work actively to prevent these crimes.” Added Miranda, “If we can help reduce the number of perpetrators through education and prevention, we can have a positive effect on this problem.”

University of Arizona Police Chief Anthony Daykin concluded by noting, “I work with a high-risk age group, so prevention is especially important on campus. We know that very few assaults that occur on campus ever get reported to us, but we do everything we can to encourage reporting and thoroughly investigate all reports for prosecution of those responsible. However, the most success will be achieved when the attitudes of men are changed so that violence is not seen as an option in their relationships and interactions with women.”

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