

# THE CONCORDIAN

THE OFFICIAL STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF  
CONCORDIA COLLEGE - MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA

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## NEWS

Friday, February 04, 2005

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### Domitrz asks: Can I kiss you?

*By Alexandra Lundahl*

We've all seen it a million times. In the movies, on TV, a man opens a door, a beautiful woman stands on the other side of the room. Music magically begins to play. Their eyes lock. In one sweeping moment they're locked in a passionate embrace. No words are said. None were needed. Or were they?

Mike Domitrz, public speaker and author of the book "May I Kiss You," spoke Tuesday night on the importance of asking before people become intimate with one another.

One in four college women and one in eight men will be a victim of sexual assault before they turn 24, according to Angela Bachman, the community outreach coordinator at Fargo's Rape and Abuse Crisis Center. Last year there were 2,508 reported cases of domestic and sexual violence in the Fargo-Moorhead area. Of those, 838 were sexual assault victims, Bachman said.

Concordia's Campus Entertainment Commission brought Domitrz to campus because he presents the issue of sexual violence and relationships in an entertaining and relevant way, said Kristin Steffan, CEC co-commissioner. It's hard for students to find entertaining ways to learn about these issues, she said, but Domitrz makes that possible.

"Students need to be aware of issues like this and this is a good way for them to learn about things like this without being lectured at," Steffan said.

The main point Domitrz stresses in his book and program is that asking is essential before any kind of intimacy-and that includes kissing and holding hands.

"Before people ever get to see the program, the typical response is, 'doesn't asking ruin the moment?'" Domitrz said. "Well, once they've seen the program or read the book, they realize asking makes the moment more memorable, more romantic, more intimate, and most of all, much, much more respectful."

Domitrz's humorous and interactive presentation was full of audience participation, dynamic expressions and impromptu acting in order to use entertainment as a vessel to reach students.

Senior Pam Saungweme attended the presentation. Domitrz was a powerful speaker and I could relate to

his points, she said.

She identified with the fact that it's usually men who take the initiative in relationships. Some of the issues he discussed had never occurred to her, she said.

"It made me realize, I guess, that a lot of times we women, because guys usually make the first move, often go with the flow, not because we necessarily want to," Saungweme said.

She now believes it's critical for men to ask before they make a physical move. Asking first is never silly or stupid, and she encourages all men to try it.

Some students, however, felt they already knew about issues of respect and sexual violence. Senior Thurmond Stephens said he understood the issues beforehand and there's still importance in body language. Nonetheless, he agrees asking is probably a good idea and may even try it himself.

"I think I will ask," Stephens said. "I think it's a great thing to ask. For one, it keeps people on their toes. And then you also get to learn about yourself."

When Domitrz was in college, he learned his sister had been sexually assaulted. That changed his life. He came to realize men and women are taught to date differently, but both ways are based on disrespect, generally with men in the dominant role.

A year after he learned about his sister, a speaker came to his campus, and he realized that's what he wanted to do. He now travels all over the United States and Canada to between 70 and 80 college campuses a year, speaking about sexual violence and the importance of asking before becoming physical.

"The number one thing we want students to do is they can ask and they should ask," Domitrz said. "That is the only absolute way you can know you have consent. And the entire approach begins with respect."

Domitrz hopes his programs help to heighten the level of people's awareness about sexual assault. He emphasized that the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center would love to have students work with and assist them to help create positive change in the community. Students can make a difference, he said.

Bachman couldn't agree more. She hopes programs like Domitrz's will help reduce the number of cases she sees at the Center each year.

"Education and knowledge about an issue is the deterrent of violence helping people who have been victims to receive help," Bachman said.

Domitrz encourages people to email him with questions or comments at [mike@domitrz.com](mailto:mike@domitrz.com).

More information can be found at the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center. The crisis hotline can be reached at 800-344-7273, and the Center at 701-293-7273.