

Campus Once Again Trying Safe Walk Program

By Tara STEWART-STANLEY

Student Union Executive Vice President, Krista Gallant, is in the process of implementing a 'Safe Walk' program on campus. She hopes to have it up and running by mid-October in order to increase student confidence and security.

Gallant was looking through old university files when she stumbled upon information about a 'Safe Walk' Program. This got her thinking about how ridiculous it is UPEI does not have such a program in place. Her first step was to contact the Student Union President, Chris Power. He told her how when the program was first implemented in the mid-1990s, it just didn't go over well. It wasn't successful. Gallant says things are different now and a program like this will work.

"I just think with the recent events that have taken place on Prince Edward Island, people are getting a little more nervous because we have this little image that Prince Edward Island's the nicest, happiest place on earth, and no one really would do anything to harm anyone else," Gallant explains. "But sadly, it's getting to the point where we know the difference and things happen pretty much right behind us, on the trail, and it's time to put up our precautions and make sure people are safe."

Gallant says some students might feel silly calling security to walk

them to their car or their nearby home. She feels this program will put students more at ease. When 'Safe Walk' is in place, students can use the blue emergency poles located throughout campus, or any payphones or elevator phones, to reach security. Once contacted, two volunteer students will meet the lone person and walk them to their destination. A planned perimeter will be set in place as well, so those living in certain off-campus areas, will be able to use the services as well.

"We'll have two people because we wouldn't want the other person walking back by themselves," Gallant explains, "that's the whole point of it. So, we'd have a pair. If we can't get two for one night, we'll get a security officer and a student to walk."

Gallant is planning to check all the blue emergency poles on campus, to ensure everything is working properly, before starting the program. She says this is being done now, but wants to double check everything herself.

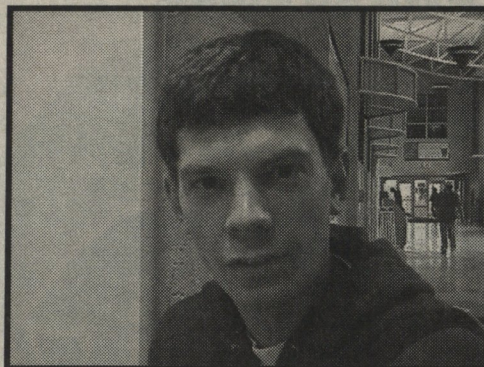
Gallant was never sure herself how the blue poles functioned. If a student needs help, pushing the button on a blue pole will immediately send a message to security. People should not hesitate to use any of the university security systems currently in place.

"I always thought that you had to be dying to touch those poles," Gallant laughs, "like it was your last measure or resort. You ran with your last dying breath to touch the pole. But, it's not like that at all. It can be used as a precautionary measure as well."

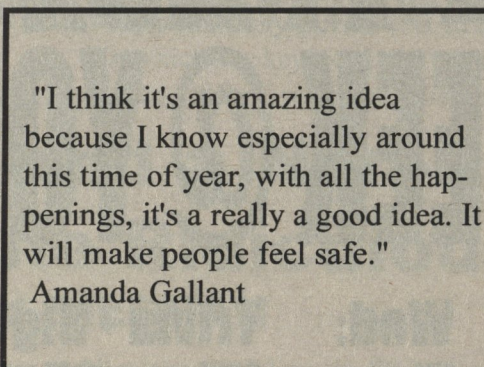
Until all the glitches have been worked out, students can simply go to or call security (behind the sports centre) for any help they may need.

"If there's only one person that uses it all year," Gallant stresses, "to me it's worth it, that one person who feels a little more comfortable walking home. Preventative measures are so important. Why take the risk? That's what I want to get out. Why bother taking the risk, you can have more safety."

We asked students what they think about a potential Safe Walk program. Is it a good idea?



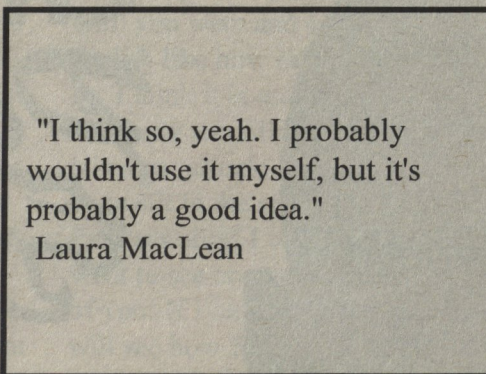
"I think it's a great idea. They do it at another campus that I know of in Ontario, Western. I know people feel much safer walking to and from class and bar happenings, and whatever's going on late at night. At Western it's a male and a female and they go and walk whoever..."
Paul J. Felton



"I think it's an amazing idea because I know especially around this time of year, with all the happenings, it's a really a good idea. It will make people feel safe."
Amanda Gallant



"I'd say yes, because it's a commuter population, not a lot of people live on campus. A lot of people want to be safe when they walk to their cars."
Joel Gillespie



"I think so, yeah. I probably wouldn't use it myself, but it's probably a good idea."
Laura MacLean

