

**COMMUNITY**

Ending silence: Hundreds attend annual Take Back the Night rally in Auburn



6 HOURS AGO • [SAMANTHA HOUSE THE CITIZEN](#)

AUBURN | Hundreds of men, women and children raised their voices Wednesday evening to send a message: Cayuga County will not tolerate violence.

The marchers flocked to downtown Auburn for the 2013 edition of Take Back the Night, an annual event that simultaneously builds support for victims of sexual and domestic violence while asking the community to actively campaign against abuse.

The weather, however, did not cooperate.

Stormy skies, whistling wind and the promise of rain sent the rally into City Hall. Hundreds of marchers — many carrying balloons and signs — filed into the meeting room, leaning on walls and sitting on the carpet and benches.

By the time the attendees made it inside, City Hall's meeting room was at capacity, forcing marchers to listen from the nearby hallway and lobby.

Sarah Barnard, the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's domestic violence services director, started the rally by calling the community to take action.

"Domestic violence is not a poor problem. It's not a black or white problem," she said, "It's everybody's problem."

Introductions were followed by an a capella rendition of Mary Mary's "Can't Give Up Now," a mini march of Booker T. Washington Community Center participants and a pledge to fight violence from a group of Moravia students.

Many advocates — including counselors, teachers and law enforcement officials — addressed the crowd, enticing the community to speak out against abuse.

District Attorney Jon Budelmann reflected on the murders of Bridget Bell and Katie Socci, telling attendees that the devastating consequences of domestic violence stretch beyond the initial victim. He encouraged the community to help build an environment where victims feel empowered to speak and abusers know violence will be punished.

"I challenge each and every one of you to take action in your lives," Budelmann said. "Do what it is that you can do to help make all of us safer."

Brandy Quigley, of the Auburn Police Department, said she has witnessed a drastic change in the way people react to violence during her 16 years working as a police officer.

When she first started, police received few reports about domestic violence — an issue many people considered to be a private, family matter. Now, Quigley said APD responds to many more domestic violence calls, many of which are made by neighbors and passing motorists.

"We now have a community looking out for people," she said.

Multiple survivors of domestic and sexual violence bravely stood and shared their stories.

Although most of the survivors started with shaky voices, each left the microphone smiling to standing ovations and loud cheers.

Nancy, a survivor of sexual violence, said she kept the abuse she endured secret for 40 years, dealing with her suffering by pursuing unhealthy relationships and an unhealthy lifestyle.

Since she confronted her abuser and sought help, Nancy said she has started to take care of herself, losing more than 100 pounds and gaining a happier life.

"I look forward to each day instead of thinking: 'Damn. I woke up,'" she said. "Someday, I will learn to love me."

Carolyn Green, a local advocate, rallied the crowd with a powerful speech that charged the room with a sense of empowerment.

"We the people are a precious people. No one's supposed to be in captivity," she said. "We're all supposed to be free."

Go Online

To check out footage of the 2013 edition of Auburn's Take Back the Night rally, visit auburnpub.com.