

## **MU forensics program supports women at expo**

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HUNTINGTON - Saturday was all about women supporting women for the members of the Marshall University Forensic Identification Association.

The group hosted its first Women's Expo on Saturday at Pullman Square with the goal of helping local women learn more about their resources as well as helping the organization raise funds in support of members attending the national American Academy of Forensic Science conference in February 2016.

The event included information for women including how to take care of their personal health, how to defend themselves and how to support other women.

"We want women to come and have fun and get empowered," said Amber Payne, administrative assistant at Marshall's Forensic Science Center. "We want to promote women's health and wellness, especially during Breast Cancer Awareness Month."

The forensic association is a student organization composed of forensic science graduate students in Marshall's forensic science master's degree program.

Among exhibitors at the event were Contact of Huntington, which provides resources and support for victims of sexual assault and Damsel in Defense, which provides self-defense lessons and equipment to women. Other exhibitors included Branches Domestic Violence Shelter, Dress for Success River Cities, Mission West Virginia and New Testament Freewill Baptist Church.

Laurel Hardy, 24, is a second-year student in the forensic science program. Hardy came to Marshall from her hometown near Charlotte, North Carolina, to attend Marshall.

"It's the number one forensic science program in the nation," said Hardy, who is the fundraising chairwoman for the forensic identification association. "There are so many areas of forensic science you can go into - DNA, chemistry, digital and crime scene investigations. There's many paths you can take."

Marshall's forensic science program has achieved the top ranking eight years straight, since 2007, in its students' performances in the national Forensic Science Assessment Test, a national test offered each year by the American Board of Criminalistics.

The laboratories at the Forensic Science Center, located where Marshall's Fairfield Stadium once stood, also have played an active role in testing rape kits from Detroit, New Orleans and Los Angeles that previously went untested for several years.

As a part of a professional-wear fashion show, Hardy said that while the event served as a fundraiser for the club, it also served as a way to find encouragement among other women in the city.

"We want everybody to feel good about themselves," she said. "We really want women in our community to know what is out there in Huntington for them to do and what is available for them in terms of resources."

Additional exhibitors and vendors at the event included Beachbody, Jamberry, Thirty-One, Younique, Zumba, Two Trees Jewelry, Le Vita Sana, The Crafty Warrior, Miss Priss Designs, Handmade Baubles, MUFIA and the Marshall University Forensic Science Delta Delta Epsilon National Honor Society.

Door prizes from exhibitors as well as from Mary Kay Cosmetics also were given away throughout the day.



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