

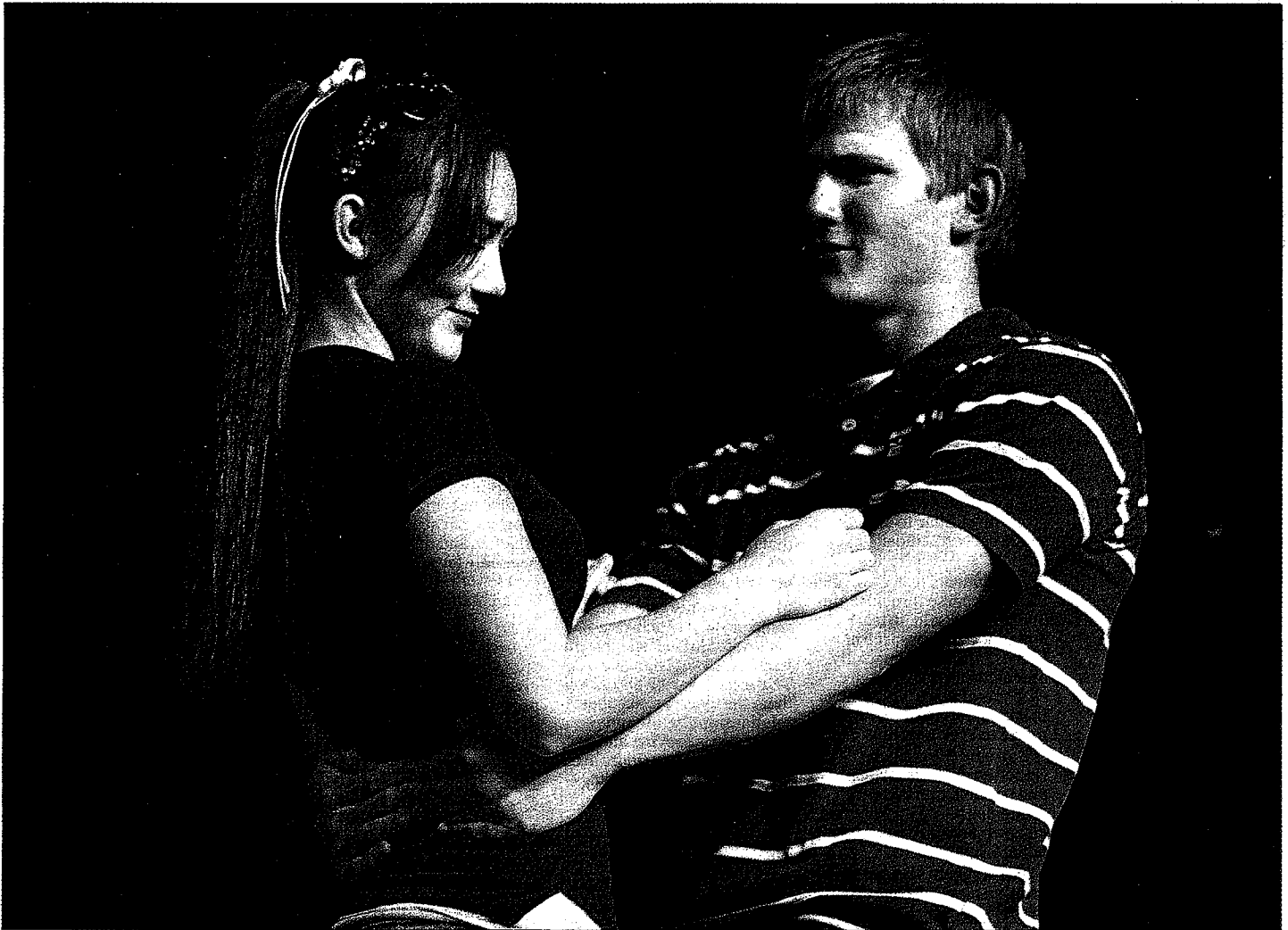
TIMES-CALL

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Jackie Endsley/Times-Call

Galen Kelleghan, left, a junior at Niwot High School, and Kevin Winn, a junior at Silver Creek High School, perform a skit about a controlling and abusive relationship for students at Frederick High School on April 9. They are part of a group called TERA (Teens Ending Relationship Abuse).

Breaking the cycle

Students start peer education group on teen dating violence

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Students start peer education group on teen dating violence

By Melanie M. Sidwell
Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — More than 250 students at Frederick High School witnessed the abuse between couples: the name-calling; the constant tracking via cell phone and text messaging; the threat of rumors, lies and physical intimidation; as well as the cycle of remorse and affection after each altercation.

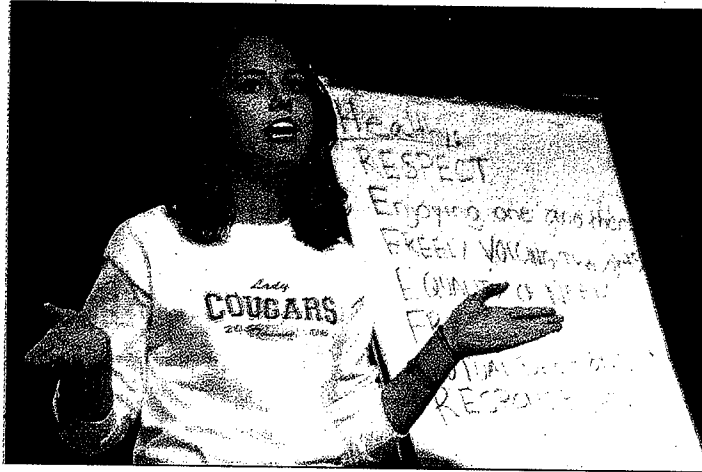
The couples — portrayed by members of Teens Ending Relationship Abuse — represented the kinds of abusive behaviors teens might encounter in romantic relationships, a subject explored during an assembly for freshmen and their upperclassman mentors April 9 at Frederick High.

TERA is giving 22 presentations through May at St. Vrain Valley schools using a pilot program the teens designed, adviser Fred Wilson said.

"There is a huge need" for domestic abuse services for teens, said Sarah Gail, outreach coordinator of Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley, a partner with TERA.

Officer Tori Bellah, an adult mentor for TERA, said the police department is seeing an increase in the number of domestic violence arrests and offenders are getting younger.

"We're talking to kids in the middle



TERA member Kat Freed-Myers, a sophomore at Niwot High School, tells students about the difference between healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships in a presentation at Frederick High School on April 9.

schools now" about prevention and awareness of behaviors that could lead to abusive relationships, Bellah said.

"A lot of kids just don't know that what is happening to them is illegal and wrong," said Master Police Officer Greg Malsam of the Longmont Police

Department.

Longmont police have arrested an average of two students per local high school each school year in domestic violence incidences, Malsam said.

About 2 percent of all domestic abuse cases in Boulder County involve those 18 and younger, according to the

RESOURCES

Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley: 24-hour crisis line, 303-772-4422. For more information on TERA, call the office at 303-772-0432 or visit www.safeshelterofstvrain.org

Longmont Ending Violence Initiative (LEVI) provides non-emergency prevention/education materials and referrals to domestic violence resources, 303-774-4534. www.longmontdomesticviolence.org

Boulder County Domestic Abuse Prevention Project.

The project, which stated it rarely receives juvenile case information because such cases are not often labeled "domestic violence," reported that 34 males and 26 females younger than 18 have been defendants in domestic abuse cases in Boulder County since 2004.

The number of juvenile domestic abuse victims in that time was 137, the report said.

"As you can see, the lack of reporting is huge" for teen dating violence, Malsam said, which is why education efforts like TERA and domestic violence nonprofits are so important.

TERA was formed this year by

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VIOLENCE:

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members of the Career Development Center's chapter of Future Business Leaders of America.

Wilson said that each year, FBFA students can create a chapter project, which can then compete with other chapter projects at the state level in the community service category.

Wilson said the FBFA members, who are mostly students from Silver Creek and Niwot high schools, grew interested in raising awareness about teen dating violence after hearing a speaker from the Boulder County nonprofit Moving to End Sexual As-

sault.

He said the 24 students then met with Gail, who said Safe Shelter wanted to develop a program similar to MESA's, which serves Boulder Valley schools.

The students took a two-day training course through Safe Shelter, Gail said, to learn the dynamics and research of relationship abuse, especially among teens. TERA addresses forms of abuse and control in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Gail said the students designed a rough curriculum and possible marketing strategies based on what they learned through their training at Safe Shelter.

The students also are recruiting new TERA presen-

ters to continue and expand the program through Safe Shelter, Gail said.

"We're hoping next year to get more kids involved and that other club chapters ... develop their own TERA chapter," Wilson said.

"It's easier to relate to someone who's their own age," said Galen Kelleghan, a junior at Niwot High and a TERA member. "We're giving them the tools to make their relationships better and recognize how annoying and harmful other behaviors are."

"And we're learning, too," said Kat Freed-Myers, a Niwot sophomore and TERA member.

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