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April

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Dudes take a turn in heels to raise sexual violence awareness

By ROBBIE MILLER

FOR THE YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

Kenny Hails shuffled in obvious discomfort in the midday warmth Friday.

But it wasn't the heat -- everyone driving past Millennium Plaza could see his hula skirt and high heels.

"This is ridiculous," Hails said. "My feet hurt."

But Hails was all smiles when he saw the 34 other men sharing his pain.

Hails was one of 150 participants who turned out for Yakima's first "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" march to raise awareness about sexual violence against women.

Marchers chanted and waved signs as the high heel-clad men made the staggering 12-block trek from Millennium Plaza to First Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and back.

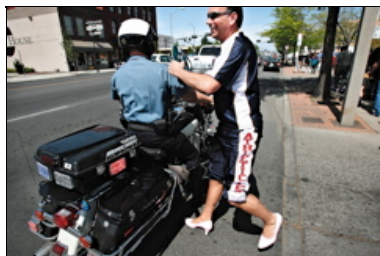
The men were from the Yakima Police Department, the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, the Yakima Fire Department, Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health and the Yakima Bears baseball team.

Kim Foley, CWCMMH program coordinator, organized the march to bring attention to a problem her organization confronts through its Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy Program.

"We're like every other community," Foley said. "We have our share" of sexual violence.

The turnout, however, far surpassed the 35 pairs of high heels organizers bought for the event.

"Wow," Foley said, stepping back to see the blocklong stretch of



KRIS HOLLAND/Yakima Herald-Republic

Yakima police Lt. Mike Merryman pretends to jump on the back of officer Ryan Wisner's motorcycle while wearing high heels during the "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" march in Yakima on Friday.

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marchers during the walk. "They're willing to come out and do something totally silly to bring awareness to the problem."

Before the march, organizers handed out Band-Aids for blisters as well as some sobering statistics on sexual violence.

A murmur of complaints buzzed under chants of "No means no!"

"I'm hurtin', dude," Hails said halfway through the march.

"I think people are crazy for wearing shoes like this," said one marcher.

"It's the balls of your feet that just kill," complained another.

Curbs proved to be hazardous, but no injuries were reported despite several close calls.

Word of the march spread through fliers and radio announcements, drawing many marchers who weren't from the participating organizations.

Local businesses donated lunches and massages for a drawing, and YPD received a \$100 gift card for bringing the most men.

Hails felt blisters developing and was glad to slip back into his comfortable black tennis shoes.

"I'll come prepared next year," he said. "I'll do some training."

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KRIS HOLLAND/Yakima Herald-Republic

Some of the 150 men in the march hoof it in their heels down Third Street.



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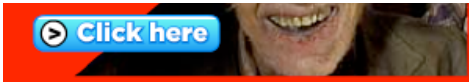
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