

Mother of slain Mathew Shepard urges campus to combat hate

BY MICHAEL LESTINGI

Judy Shepard, activist mother of Mathew Shepard, a young gay man brutally killed five years ago, spoke to a crowded Colton Chapel Wednesday night with a message of hope and acceptance. Many of the 450 audience members barely held back tears as Shepard showed a seven-minute video that described hate-motivated crimes and the specifically vicious attack leading to her son's death. On October 18, 1998, Mathew Shepard was beaten and tied to a fence post, the injuries of which led to his death several days later. Sobs

were audible in Colton Chapel as his mother recounted the end of her son's life.

Shepard travels across the country sharing her story of pain and "a mom's opinions and suggestions" to make the world a more accepting place for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. First, she urged the audience to avoid using slurs and telling anti-gay jokes, encouraging people to object when such comments are made. "There are no innocent bystanders," she said. She also emphasized participation in the political process, challenging Lafayette students to "vote, [and] be good constituents." Coming out as

a friend, ally or family member in support of the gay community was also stressed.

Shepard's suggestions were clear, simple and engaging. Meredith White '06, left with the feeling that "I can make a difference doing small things." "[Mrs. Shepard] put a lot of power in me to make this movement a success," she said.

Omoniyi Adekanmbi '04 expressed a more cautious reaction. "I thought the audience was receptive, but I got the impression that it was the same old Lafayette crowd that comes and listens ... but then doesn't do anything."

Brad Knot '06, co-chair of QuEST, Lafayette's gay/straight alliance, immediately noticed a strong emotional reaction from audience members. "I don't think [the offenders] realized how their actions impact the world," he said.

At the crowded reception that followed, Shepard embraced many of the audience members who came from both the Lafayette community and the greater Lehigh Valley. The event's main coordinator, ALF co-chair Greg Blevin



PHOTO BY KEVIN BARRY

Julie Castner '04 and Jennifer Carty '04 discuss personal experiences with Judy Shepard at the reception following her moving presentation.

'07, was one of the first to approach Shepard after her address. "Her story of bravery really touched me," he said.

As part of United Against Hate Week, Shepard's visit was sponsored by QuEST (Questioning Established Sexual Taboos), LAF (Lafayette Activi-

ties Forum), LINC (Lafayette Intercultural Networking Council) Delta Upsilon, Students for Social Justice, ALF (Association of Lafayette Feminists), the Office of the Dean of Students, the Office of Residence Life, and the Office of the Dean of Studies.

Bush crosses line

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of respect for a serious situation that his own errors have created.

Bush supporters claim that he was only trying to have a little fun and that it was not outside the bounds of respectable satire, that is, with the exception of Rumsfeld who asserts he, the Secretary of Defense, is "not in a position to

fact that your loved one seemingly died looking for something which doesn't exist. But don't get upset, it's a tradition!" is hardly an excusable statement.

Nothing sums it up better than a statement made in reference to the President by Al Sharpton: "Five hundred soldiers lost their lives, looking for weapons that weren't there. Billions