

THE ADVOCATE

Kimleigh Smith brings awareness to sexual assault in her one-woman show.

SUPERHERO PERFORMANCE EMPOWERS OTHERS BY MADI BATES

Kimleigh Smith brought life and authenticity to Tivoli Turnhalle on April 15 when she performed “T-O-T-A-L-L-Y-! A super woman show.” The event, hosted by the Phoenix Center, was to advertise Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which lasts for the month of April.

“We got to experience the whole spectrum of emotions from her,” said Sarah Berg, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for the Phoenix Center. “Healing is possible. It looks different for everyone, and that is OK.”



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photo: Ayla

Smith has had great success in Hollywood, having had roles in movies such as *The Princess Diaries* and *Bad Words*, which can be seen in theaters now. She has also had enormous success in the self-help genre and found that her performance in the one-woman show serves the dual purpose of entertainment and education. “The more we help others, the happier, more healthy we will be,” Smith said.

Smith is the writer and star of the show, and gave a brutally truthful story of her life. She includes a gang rape when she was 17-years-old as a freshman in college and her repression of that memory for years. “I was too young and too innocent to handle it,” Smith said.

Smith, however, could not ignore the symptoms of her Post Traumatic Stress Disorder for long. Her hysterical paralysis, in which she lost the use of her legs for temporary periods of time, hindered her ability to have a normal life. “She literally lost control of her body because of the trauma,” Berg said.

Smith found release in hypnotherapy, and recalled her memory as it really happened. “Blood rolled down my leg. It wasn’t my period, it was my innocence,” Smith said in the performance. The show then follows Smith as she becomes the woman she is today—an actress, co-author of *The Winning Way*, and founder of Embrace Your Cape Enterprises.

“You get to choose your life and you know instinctively what that should be,” Smith said. “Being a superhero is honoring what you’re supposed to do.”

Smith admitted after the show that she attributed much of her success in life to writing as a catharsis; however, the idea for the show came to her in a dream and has been a way to help other survivors of sexual assault learn to succeed in life. “I really want

people to lead thriving lives, not just surviving,” Smith said.
“Even though I wouldn’t wish being gang raped on my worst enemy, it’s a part of my story and I can do good with it or bad with it,” Smith said.

“When you are honest and open, you make the most change,” Smith said. “I think being honest, authentic, and real makes the audience more authentic, as well. It makes the audience go along the journey. The more real I became, the more empowered I became as a human being because I came out of living in the shadows of my life.”