

## The Yellow Dress

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Actress Rydia Vielehr donned “The Yellow Dress” and gave a compelling performance on the warning signs of dating violence.

WILLISTON — An important message that had been intended for the youth of Williston poured upon a nearly empty room.

The one-woman play, “The Yellow Dress,” recounts true stories of victims of dating violence. Its performance had been reserved for Monday night at the ARC. But despite an advertising push at the high school, college, and throughout the community, few turned up for the performance.

Service provider at the Family Crisis Shelter Tana Hinricksen waited anxiously before the play began, in hopes more seats would be filled. The lack of community involvement gave an air of disappointment for those that had worked hard in procuring the production.

The service workers see the victims of dating violence and domestic abuse all too often and felt it was duly important to reach those most vulnerable — teenagers.

“I think we need to do more things like this in the community, to get them aware,” Hinricksen said. “I think it’s too easy to brush it aside and pretend like this doesn’t happen. I think it happens more than we think it does.”

After ample time had been given for all to find a seat, actress Rydia Vielehr of Deana’s Educational Theater quickly morphed into her character, “Anna.”

“Anna” recounted the relationship with her significant other from its onset and the viewer is subjected to the slow isolation the girl finds herself in. Many in the audience members sat alone in the vast room which only exemplified the feeling for seclusion.

Through insults, alienation from friends and family, and monitoring of her every movement throughout the day, “Anna’s” boyfriend slowly lay the groundwork for complete control over her. She was slow to realize the manipulation taking place but only realized how dire the situation had become when the abuse turned physical.

“I didn’t want him to leave me,” said Vielehr, in character. “After awhile, it didn’t feel like love anymore.” As the actress quickly changed into the iconic yellow dress did the viewers realize the story had been a narration of the ghost of “Anna.”

The room remained still and cold as Vielehr exited the scene.

It wasn’t until Vielehr returned did it seem the audience exhaled. It was an impactful, true story and one that service providers felt should have been seen by the teenage demographic to better help others understand the warning signs of abuse.