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Fox TV host Bill O'Reilly to visit BU, speak at benefit for agency that aids rape victims

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 12, 2012 02:02 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Bill O'Reilly, the host of Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor" and a Boston University alumnus, is scheduled to return to his alma mater this week to deliver the keynote speech at yearly benefit for a foundation that provides support to rape victims and their families.

The fourth annual "Justice is Served" event is set to begin Friday at 5:30 p.m. at the campus' management school at 595 Commonwealth Ave.

The fund-raiser aids the [It Happened to Alexa Foundation](#), an organization that provides direct financial assistance to rape victims' families for travel-related expenses during the litigation process.

The foundation was created in 2003 by the parents of Alexa Branchini, who, at age 18, reported being raped at knifepoint by a man in his early 30s inside a BU dormitory in Sept. 1999.

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Abdelmajid Akouk, the man accused of raping her, was convicted by a jury on all charges against him, including aggravated rape, home invasion, and kidnapping. He is serving a 40- to-45-year sentence.

During the legal proceedings, Branchini and her family traveled from their home in Buffalo to Massachusetts frequently and spent about one month in Boston during the trial.

Branchini testified at her own trial, and says: "I wouldn't have testified if my family hadn't been with me," according to the event announcement.

"After their daughter's long and traumatic trial ended, Stacey and Tom Branchini realized that many families in similar circumstances would not have the finances to support the travel and lodging costs incurred in an out-of-town trial," the announcement said. "They didn't want a lack of funds to prevent any rape victim from prosecuting her [or his] attacker."

O'Reilly includes the foundation on [a list of charities he supports](#) and is said by event organizers to be passionate about the cause.

The evening is scheduled to begin with a book-signing reception, where VIP ticket holders will have the chance to meet and take photos with the political commentator and TV. Later, O'Reilly will deliver the event's keynote speech.

Local radio and TV personality Jim Braude of WTKK 96.9 FM and NECN will be master of ceremonies during the benefit.

The annual benefit at BU comes amid recent concern from some campus community members over women's safety and sexual assault support services provided by the school following incidents reported in on-campus dormitories this academic year.

Two men's ice hockey players have been charged with rape, prompting the school to [create a task force](#) to investigate the team's "culture."

For tickets and more information, visit www.ithappenedtoalexa.org or call the toll-free number 877-77ALEXA.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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