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UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The annual Blue Out football game began in 2011, just after the Sandusky scandal broke. The Penn State community, devastated by the scandal, came together and wore blue to show their support for child abuse victims.

Seniors who will graduate in May of 2015 are the last students who were present in Happy Valley at the time of the scandal. Being freshmen at the time, this year's seniors still recall what it was like at Penn State throughout those difficult months.

"I remember first reading about it and not thinking it would turn Penn State upside down" said Cristina Fernandez, senior and president of One Heart. "To me, I had no idea who Jerry Sandusky was and at the time, not as many victims had come out about it. Within days, the news erupted all over and it became one of the dreariest days I ever had in my whole Penn State career. Whenever people ask me about what it was like to be on campus, I always tell them it was emotionally overwhelming. Every day there was more devastating news. Every day you just didn't know what to expect. Friends and family made very disrespectful comments and were constantly asking me questions about what they heard on the media. It was devastating that the whole university and the victims of abuse pay consequences for the actions taken by such few individuals."

"The days following the scandal in 2011 made me feel confused, enraged, and hopeless. I couldn't believe that something so terrible was going on at Penn State. This entire university is my family, and I felt like I had been lied to by my own family," said Danielle Roethlein, senior and One Heart's Public Relations Director. "The worst part was feeling like there was nothing I could do to help. The victims had been abused years ago, and nothing could go back and change that. It wasn't until I joined One Heart that I realized while we can't change the past to help those who have been hurt, we can join together to help children who are going through the same terrible abuse right now. If the scandal taught us anything, it's that abuse can occur anywhere, and many times, we are blind to it. We need to become more educated about how to recognize signs of abuse, and we need to work together to finally put an end to child sexual abuse."

The Blue Out has successfully raised funds and awareness for the cause since its inception. In 2011, a total of \$47,000 was raised, all of which was given to charities including Prevent Child Abuse PA and Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

March and Shapiro graduated in 2012 and handed the responsibility on the Blue out on to One Heart, a student organization.

The second Blue Out football game took place on September 22, 2012. A new Blue Out shirt was designed and sold at university bookstores on all Penn State campuses, the Family Clothesline, Neebo and Lion's Pride. Proceeds from the shirt came to \$65,565, which was again donated to charity. Ally Zimmerman, a PSU student and cheerleader, created Blue Out sunglasses and sold them through her company, State Shades. The sunglasses led to \$370 in donations. Members of the student organization, One Heart, got involved with the Blue Out in 2012. They canned outside Beaver Stadium on the day of the game and raised over \$12,000.



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In 2013, the Blue Out game was held on Sept. 21. One Heart was able to raise \$26,000 for charity through sales of the 2013 Blue Out shirt and canning at the stadium on the day of the game.

“I want people to understand that this isn't an issue at Penn State. It's an issue in our society and around the world,” said Fernandez. “Just because Penn State's case caught so much media attention does not mean that at other institutions there aren't people that make the same decisions. These issues are deeply engrained in today's culture...As a senior, this is something very close to my heart because I first handedly saw Happy Valley not be Happy Valley...We have been through 3 football coaches, 3 presidents, and a long emotional rollercoaster that never seems to end. Even though we have gotten so much negative pushback from society, I continue to be involved because I know we are making a difference in people's lives. It is even more critical that this tradition continues with a strong passion for doing the right thing.”