

RAPE KITS REMAIN UNTESTED

Across New York, hundreds sit in evidence rooms

ANTHONY BORRELLI
ABORRELLI@ITHACAJOURNAL.COM

Sitting in evidence rooms across New York are hundreds of untested rape kits, some possibly holding clues that could link criminals to the crimes.

In the region, more than a hundred sexual assault kits in evidence lockers remain untested, some stashed away for as long as 10 years. Several departments in the region keep no count of the number of untested kits in their possession. Last week, the USA TODAY Media Network — through hundreds of requests under state open records laws — revealed more than 70,000 untested sexual assault kits in the custody of more than 1,000 law enforcement agencies nationwide. The number identified may be only a small fraction of the national accumulation that likely reaches into the hun-

dreds of thousands across the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies. Those kits contain powerful forensic evidence that could be used to identify assailants, exonerate wrongly accused suspects and confirm the accounts of survivors. Instead, they remain in storage. New York doesn't require authorities to test all sexual assault kits. But some in law enforcement encourage sending all sexual assault kits for analysis and entry into a federal database for the sole rea-

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Untested rape kits nationwide number in the hundreds of thousands. Why police say they don't test every kit. Years later, testing evidence is solving rape cases.

"To me, the rape kits are evidence and if (police) find a fingerprint they're going to test it — so these should be tested, too."

RAINI BAUDENDISTEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CRIME VICTIMS ASSISTANCE CENTER IN BINGHAMTON

25 years of good vibes



The crowd dances to Thunder Body in front of the grandstand stage at the GrassRoots festival Friday in Trumansburg.



Simon Wheeler / Staff Photo
Festival-goer Emily Conlon, of Ithaca, learned to hula hoop three years ago.

Hula hoops round out the fun at GrassRoots

NICK REYNOLDS
NREYNOLDS@ITHACAJOURNAL.COM

TRUMANSBURG — A common sight in front of a GrassRoots stage is an open space in the crowd, at its center is someone gyrating with a hula hoop, grooving to the music and wowing attendees with mesmerizing displays of personal expression, endurance and finesse. Most tents and stalls at the four-day festival, no matter what else they sell, also offer hula hoops for \$18 to \$20 each. Nearly everywhere, festival-goers can be seen walking around with the plastic rings slung over their shoulders. Though the appeal isn't always obvious, vendors at the Trumansburg event recognize the demand. "They're just fun," said Claudia Sayke, of the Hammondsport-based store For Claudia's Sayke. "They're so simple. It's like a kid playing with their toys; they have so many toys, but they end up focusing on the simplest thing, like a spoon." Customizing a hula hoop is one of its biggest draws. They can be made lighter or heavier to accommodate a user's preference. They can be taped with dif-

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Festival veterans recall years of celebration

NICK REYNOLDS
NREYNOLDS@ITHACAJOURNAL.COM

TRUMANSBURG — A quarter of a century in, GrassRoots has a history impossible to tell merely through changing lineups and ticket prices. Instead, the legacy is told in friendships made and hardened over the years, of antics and good vibes, of faded T-shirts, cold beers and family ties. Picking out GrassRoots veterans from the crowd is easy. They're the ones without inhibition, confidently dodging the packed walkways with an airy obliviousness, shades low and smiling, "living in the present," as Kevin Kinsella said during his opening set on Thursday. Take the "Ambeerlance," home of a raucous group of veterans at the 25-year-old festival, where one can get a real



If You Go
What: 25th annual Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival of Music and Dance.
When: Through Sunday.
Where: Trumansburg Fairgrounds, 2150 Trumansburg Road, Trumansburg, NY 14886.
Tickets: Daily pass is \$65 Saturday, \$45 Sunday.
Information: www.grassrootsfest.org.

Eric Szulgit and his girlfriend, Amy Mayer, both of Rochester, get ready to see a show on Friday at GrassRoots.
SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO

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