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The Women's Center Observes Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Shocking increase in assaults illustrates the need for intervention and broader community support.

WAUKESHA, Wis. – During the month of April, The Women's Center will encourage the broader community to take a stand and show support for survivors as part of its annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign. Sexual assault, rape, and other forms of abuse are endemic in our community. The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault notes that an estimated one out of seven Wisconsin women are raped during their lives. In Waukesha County, there was a staggering 82% increase in sexual assaults from 2014 to 2015, with our community ranking 50% higher than the national average.

The Women's Center Executive Director Angela Mancuso notes, "Domestic and sexual violence should never be expected or tolerated. It is critical that our community come together to show support for survivors and commit to ending the violence. Without greater understanding of the issue, perpetrators will not be held accountable for their crimes, and survivors will not receive the support they need to heal."

As the only agency in Waukesha County providing supportive services to those affected by sexual assault, sexual abuse, and trafficking, The Women's Center is proud to be a community leader in advocating for survivors and invites the public to join the conversation.

To help the broader community better understand the issue, The Women's Center will be raising awareness by:

- partnering with Waukesha County Technical College to display the Clothesline Project beginning April 21st. The Clothesline Project allows survivors of domestic or sexual violence to express themselves by writing and decorating powerful messages on shirts.
- displaying jeans decorated by survivors and allies for Denim Day on April 26th. Denim Day is a worldwide day of action to raise awareness of sexual assault and draw attention to the dangers of victim blaming. The display will be placed along the agency's fence from April 20th through the end of the month. The Women's Center encourages everyone to wear denim on April 26th to show support for survivors.

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- hosting its sold-out 40th Anniversary Luncheon on April 26th at the Italian Community Center. This event will feature a keynote address from child abduction and sexual assault survivor Elizabeth Smart.
 - Interview opportunities with Ms. Smart are available. For additional information please contact Angela Mancuso at 262-522-3809 or angelam@twcwaukesha.org.
- sharing 30 facts about sexual assault during the 30 days of April via social media at Facebook.com/TheWomensCenter and on Twitter, @twcwaukesha, via the hashtag #TWC30facts.

The Women's Center encourages community organizations and businesses to contact us for awareness ribbon pins, bracelets, Denim Day stickers, and informational materials to support their engagement efforts.

"We want everyone to know that help is always available through our 24 Hour Hotline at 262-542-3828. When a survivor makes the difficult decision to reach out for support, they will be welcomed, believed, and respected at The Women's Center" stated Mancuso.

Beyond SAAM activities this April, The Women's Center leads a wide range of initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual assault. These include violence prevention and community education programming, which can be tailored to school groups, businesses, and civic or religious organizations, counseling for adult and child survivors of sexual violence, and crisis response for sexual assault survivors at Waukesha Memorial Hospital.

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About The Women's Center

Founded in 1977, The Women's Center serves adult and child survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, including trafficking. The Women's Center offers free and comprehensive programming including: Emergency Shelter & 24-Hour Hotline; legal advocacy; family counseling; domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse counseling; substance abuse and mental health support; transitional living; community education and violence prevention; and employment and life-skills.

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