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SART Connection

Awareness Months...Why are they Important?

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Each April and October victim advocates and other professionals gear up to help promote awareness about Victim's Rights Week, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Sexual Assault Day of Action and Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

With so many awareness days, weeks and months put in place to acknowledge victims it is hard to keep track. But are these designated times important? For one thing, a month set aside to focus on a specific issue of victimization provides support to victims and serves as a reminder that they are not alone.

As we echo the saying, "People are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action and sustained by community", we also demonstrate the need to extend ourselves to all victims and survivors.

Those "survivors" affected by the various causes look forward to these months each year as a time to get involved. Awareness months also give professionals in the field opportunity to get reinvigorated by their work- a chance to give back and remember why they do what they do. Some agencies use this time to promote self care of those who help others and realize the toll it takes on them.



Director: Nicole Bishop

Director's Corner



SART Member Highlight's

Jessica L. Kahn was Chief Assistant State Attorney of the Special Victims Unit at the State Attorney's Office, from August 2007 to May 2016. She has a Juris Doctorate degree from Nova Southeastern University and a Bachelor's degree from FAU, where she played volleyball on a full scholarship.

Ms. Kahn's unit prosecutes, sex crimes, abuse and neglect of disabled adults and the elderly. She oversees the Sexually Violent Predators Program, which handles the involuntary civil for the purpose of long-term custody, control, and treatment. She has tried over 100 jury trials in her career as a prosecutor for charges including Capital Sexual Battery, Sexual Battery on a Mentally Defective Person, First Degree Murder, Drug Trafficking, Child Pornography, and Unlawful Compensation of Public Employees by Contractors.

Ms. Kahn voluntarily facilitated a series of training to transform SANE testimony that assisted the SANE's with transitioning from fact witness to expert witnesses.

Ms. Kahn works passionately and diligently to achieve the best outcome possible for every sexual assault survivor. She is an active member of SART and has contributed greatly to the mission. She was also the 1st recipient of the 2016 SART Member of the Year award & is a champion for survivors of sexual assault.



Written by: Licensed Therapist Amber Ahern



SANE's Corner

SANE nurses continue to sharpen their skills as well as those of community health care providers. SANEs participated in mock SANE exams and attended part 2 of a 3 part series on SANE expert witness testimony. Not only did the SANEs receive training, they provided training as well. Instruction on SANE response was provided to nearly 30 ER Nurses in Palm Beach County.

During the months of February, March and April 52 victims of sexual assault requested the services of a SANE. All were served by SANE nurses at the Butterfly House and/or various hospitals across the county. PBC SANEs provided 100% of adult/adolescent exams for the months of February, March and April.

Written by: SANE Coordinator Sherry Britton-Susino

Lauren's Walk & Training March 21, 2016

Lauren's Kids Hope & Healing Guide Training

This event was held on Monday, March 21st at the Palm Beach County Victim Services' SART Office in West Palm Beach. Lauren's Kids held a one-hour presentation which provided information to help families begin the healing process following a child's disclosure of sexual abuse.

At 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm at the Palm Beach County Historical Society in downtown West Palm Beach, there was a free community event open to professionals, families, children, and Lauren's Walk participants. Lauren's Kids, Palm Beach County Victim Services, and Biker's Against Child Abuse joined to provide children's activities and snacks before the walk began. At 3:00 pm the walk began from the Historical Society and included a 4.2 mile loop around downtown West Palm Beach.



Flash Mob April 1, 2016

On April 1st, 2016, Palm Beach County SART celebrated their Third Annual Flash Mob!

SART members, Survivors, Law Enforcement, Students, Faculty, Victim Advocates, Therapists and the community came together for the kickoff of the Start by Believing campaign and the Flash Mob. Participants wore the color teal to show Survivors of Sexual Assault that the community stands with them. Participants also danced, and held sings in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



Ceremony in the Garden April 12, 2016



Victim Services; Kelly Dambra, Monica Gonzalez Amber Ahern, Susan Carlini

Palm Beach County Victim Services & Certified Rape Crisis Center celebrated the 5th Anniversary of the Commemorative Bench in their *Ceremony in the Garden* event during national Crime Victims' Rights Week at Mounts Botanical Garden.

Victims shared experiences about their lives being impacted by domestic abuse, sexual assault, homicide and other violent crimes.

Victims shared the importance of how they became a crime victim but also relayed the importance of the assistance they have received through Victim Services in understanding their trauma symptoms are common reactions and through therapy they have been assisted in seeking healthy coping mechanisms to transition from victim to survivor.

Nearly 80 victims, survivors, their families, and other professionals attended this event. This teak bench was placed permanently in the Garden so all crime victims would have their own place for reflection and comfort.

EVAWI Conference Washington D.C.

Palm Beach County Victim Advocates attended the End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) Conference in Washington DC. While at the conference they had the opportunity to engage with professionals from the fields of criminal justice, advocacy and the health care profession. Some of the popular sessions included topics like Victim Blaming, Expert Testimony, Police Interviewing and Understanding the Seriousness of Stalking. They also had the opportunity to engage in smaller hands-on sessions that dove deeper into specific matters on the topic of victimization against women.



AVDA: Melanie Rodrigues; Asst. SAO Chrichet Nixon; AVDA Ana Jimenez; Victim Services Donna Rosado; Destiny by Change J.R. Thickland; Victim Services Adrienne Hillman

Proclamation April 5, 2016

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioner's sponsored the Proclamation on April 5, 2016, and declared April 2016 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month & "Start by Believing" Public Awareness Campaign. In Palm Beach County, the pain and trauma of sexual assault affects men, women, and children of all racial, social, religious, age, ethnic and economic groups. No one person, organization, agency or community can eliminate sexual assault on their own, but we can work together to educate our entire population about what can be done to prevent sexual assault, support victims, survivors and their significant others, and increase support for agencies providing services to victims/survivors.



Start By Believing Campaign

The **"Start by Believing"** public awareness campaign (a program of End Violence Against Women International) is designed to improve the response of friends, family members, and community professionals, so they can help victims to access supportive resources and engage the criminal justice system.

Palm Beach County recognizes the vital importance of designating a time devoted to increasing the general public's awareness to hold forth a vision of a community free from sexual violence. The Start By Believing Campaign and Sexual Assault Awareness Month provide an excellent opportunity for citizens to learn more about preventing sexual violence.

The **"Start by Believing"** public awareness campaign is supported by Palm Beach County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), was sponsored by Commissioner Mckinlay and supported by the Board of County Commissioners of Palm Beach County, Florida. Join the campaign!

Educate yourself at: <http://www.startbybelieving.org/> and **Start by Believing!!**

Campus Round-up 3

Campus Round Up 3, held on Feb. 5th, 2016. This full day training was the result of the dedicated time of the SART Campus Committee, was hosted by Palm Beach State College and funding from the Office on Violence against Women and Palm Beach County Victim Services. Based on reviews from previous campus roundups, presenters were able to compare and contrast the intersection of Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Title IX, Clery Act, Violence against Women Act (VAWA), Florida Statutes and local law enforcement in serving victims of campus sexual assault.

We were privileged to have State Attorney Dave Aronberg as our opening speaker. He spoke about his commitment to continue working with colleges and the Sexual Assault Team to deliver the best services available for victims of campus sexual assault. Presenters from the Clery Center for Security on Campus, the Florida Council on Sexual Violence, our State Attorney's Office and our Survivor panel received outstanding evaluations on their presentation. There were 96 in attendance, representing Law Enforcement, Campus, Medical, Fire-Rescue, Counselors, and other Victim Service providers.

Comments from the training were: "Inspirational & enlightening; appreciate the clarification on timely warning, knowledgeable presenters, powerful survivor panel, enjoyed the interaction between the various disciplines, appreciated having the answers available by the experts".

Takeaways from the day include plans for each campus to visit their local law enforcement departments (and vice versa) to continue to develop relationships. Campus staffs were invited to join the Sexual Assault Response Team & participate in the on-going committees coordinated through Palm Beach County Victim Services.



- **Florida Sex Crimes Investigators Association Conference July 31, 2016 thru August 5, 2016, Jupiter, FL**

"The Florida Sexual Crimes Investigators Association is dedicated to enhancing the quality of investigations of sexual crimes. This training is being provided to a network of investigators and prosecutors throughout the state to discuss and exchange information related to sex crimes, case management, and operational issues. "

- **Clergy workshop on Domestic and Sexual Violence "Working together keeping families safe and strong" June 27th 2016 West Palm Beach:**

SART and grant partners Destiny by Choice and AVDA (Aids to Victims of Domestic Violence) along with local law enforcement will address the importance of the role of the clergy and faith on the issue of domestic violence and sexual assault.



<https://palmbeachcan.wordpress.com/>

Victim Services SART Center

4210 North Australian Ave.
West Palm Beach, FL 33407
(561) 625-2595

24/7 Rape Crisis Violent Crime Hotline

HOTLINE: (561) 833-7273

TOLL FREE: (866) 891-7273

TTY: (561) 355-1772

Vision: Justice for all Crime Victims

Mission Statement:

With Compassion and respect, we assist victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, homicide, and other violent crimes through crisis response, advocacy, therapy, and community awareness.



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