

April Newsletter

Start By Believing

Special Dates

- **Mar 30**—
Strasburg
Pinwheel
Garden
- **Mar 31** -
Woodstock
Pinwheel
Garden
- **Apr. 1** - New
Market
Pinwheel
Garden
- **Apr. 1** - Wear
Blue Day for
CAPM
- **Apr. 1-30** -
SAAM
- **Apr. 28** -
Denim Day

Current Needs

- **Mouthwash**
- **Swiffer Wet
Jet pads and
liquid**
- **13 gal trash
bags**

“Start By Believing”. This phrase refers to victims of sexual assault, and is such an important component of a survivor’s experience that there is an entire campaign devoted to it. End Violence Against Women International launched this initiative in 2011 in an effort to end the cycle of violence and change the way society responds to sexual violence.

Why is believing survivors so important? First of all, survivors report that having a supportive person who believes that the assault happened makes a huge difference in their recovery. In addition to emotional support, survivors may receive important information and help with tangible needs as a result of disclosing to a family member, friend, or advocate. Survivors who share their experience with a supportive person are also more likely to report their assault to law enforcement.

This assistance is vital since victims of sexual assault historically have a very low rate of reporting to law enforcement; only 230 out of 1000 survivors choose to make a formal report. One of the most common reasons for not reporting is that the victim thinks they will not be believed and that the police will not do anything to help. Until our society accepts sexual assault reports as valid, the rate of reporting and bringing the perpetrators to justice will remain low.

Since it seems that believing sexual assault survivors is a critical part of helping them, why are folks reluctant to believe? This is a complicated issue, the root of which goes back centuries and is a result of the view that women are legally and socially worth less than men. This view, combined with the stereotype that females are more prone to hysteria, has created a culture in which women are not trusted or believed about many things, including rape and sexual assault.

An accusation of rape is a serious one, so what about false reports? Many people hesitate to believe survivors because if they are lying, there is the potential to ruin an innocent person’s life. Statistics tell us that false allegations of sexual misconduct fall somewhere between 2 and 10 percent, which is the same rate as for other crimes. And when we look at the reasons why reports might be classified as false, we find things like delayed reporting, inconsistencies in details, or a victim’s decision not to cooperate with investigators; all of these reasons commonly occur with traumatized assault victims and are not necessarily an indication of a false report, but rather a reflection of the victim’s emotional state.

It is important to know that believing survivors is not a substitute for investigation and due process, but rather a call for survivors’ voices to be taken seriously. As we encourage our communities to “Start By Believing”, the hope is that we will improve our societal response to survivors of sexual violence by providing much-needed support.

We can all begin by saying, “You are worthy, I am here for you, and I believe you.”

Survivor Story

ShenCo Resident



This month’s survivor is a local woman. We wanted to emphasize to our supporters that sexual assault happens everywhere, even in Shenandoah County where we feel so safe from the dangers found in urban areas. It is right here, today, and always has been. The details of this survivor’s assault have been disguised in order to protect her anonymity, but her experience is accurately reflected.

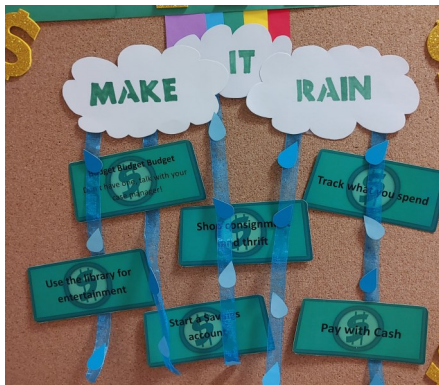
“Jane” is a recent divorcee and now a single mother of three young children. One evening she went out with two of her friends to a bar for a rare night out, where they all had a number of drinks. When the friends were ready to go, Jane told them that she was not ready yet and that she would find her own ride home. A male patron offered her a ride later that evening, but instead of taking her to her home, he drove her to an unknown location; he then sexually assaulted her in spite of her protests to stop what he was doing.

Afterward, he drove her to a gas station where she called a friend to come pick her up. Devastated, she went home, showered several times, and put her clothing in a garbage bag. It wasn’t until two days later that she felt strong enough to contact the police, but unfortunately, they did not believe her. The officers said that “there are holes in your story. And you wouldn’t have taken the clothes off if it were true.”

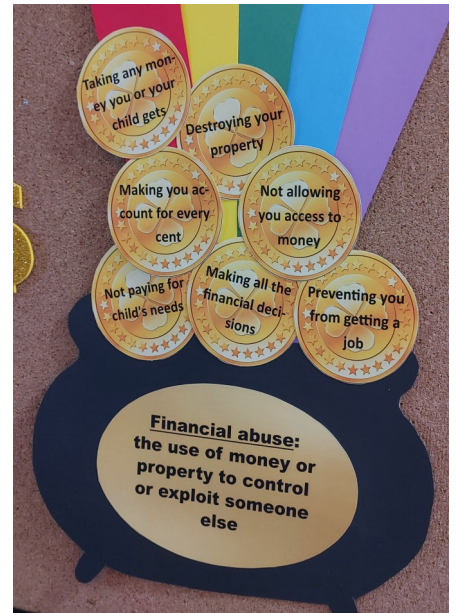
Jane also shared her experience with the two friends who were with her that night; they also did not believe her because “she seems ok now.” Jane said that no one believed her until she spoke with an advocate at Response. The relief she felt at being believed and receiving support was invaluable to Jane, and is the reason we are here.

Around the Shelter

Our bulletin board



Welcome to our March bulletin board, where we bring our attention to financial abuse as a form of domestic violence. Many folks don’t realize it but this is a very common way for abusers to control their partners; we see it all the time with the clients that Response serves, and many of them don’t even realize that it is happening.



Upcoming Events

Pinwheel Gardens



April is nationally recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month, and as part of our recognition of CAPM we “plant” pinwheel gardens throughout the county. You might wonder, “Why pinwheels?” The pinwheel has become a widely recognized symbol for the safe and carefree childhood that we all wish for children everywhere. It represents the bright, hopeful future that all children deserve. So we plant these gardens as a way to engage folks in helping to prevent child abuse in our community.

This year we were able to purchase yard signs for each garden,

explaining to the public what this is all about; we hope to promote prevention through education. Help us pass the word!



SAAM

In the DV/SV world, April certainly is a busy month! This month marks the 20th anniversary of SAAM (Sexual Assault Awareness Month); although advocates had been holding events and marches long before in an effort to bring attention to the need for a national conversation about sexual violence, it wasn't until 2001 that it was first nationally observed.

This year's theme is “We Can Build Safe Online Spaces”. The 2021 campaign is focusing on the fact that sexual harassment and abuse can happen anywhere, including online. The message centers on how to practice digital consent, the importance of intervention when we see harmful online content, and ensuring that online spaces are safe and respectful.

Look on our social media platforms for messages about SAAM throughout the month, and check out the Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce window for our SAAM display! Thanks for helping to advocate for safe spaces everywhere!



Spring Fashion Show



YES!! Our annual Spring Fashion Show is happening! Join us on **Sunday, May 23rd from 2-4pm** at Ridge Runner Farms and Brewing Company on Alonzaville Rd. for a fashionably fun time! Details are still being worked out, but we hope to have some familiar faces from around the county as our models, with light refreshments provided and wine and beer available for purchase. Gift cards and baskets full of goodies will be raffled off throughout the event.

Please plan to join us for a fun, covid-safe event! Tickets are \$35 with corporate and individual sponsorships available. We are also hoping to

livestream the event on Facebook, so if you aren't able to attend in person, check out our page on the 23rd!