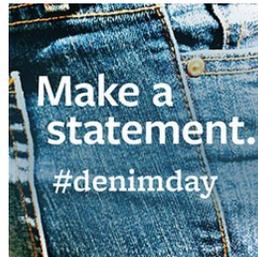


April Newsletter

Why Denim on Denim Day?

Special Dates

- **April 1-30 - SAAM and CAPM**
- **Apr. 29 - Denim Day**



Every April, amid the flurry of activities for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month, we mention that Denim Day is held at the end of April (**April 29th this year!**). We put a notice on social media, note it in the newsletter, and alert businesses to the special day. But do you really know the significance of the internationally recognized day?

The story of Denim Day began in Italy in 1992, when an 18 year old girl was raped by her driving instructor. The man drove her to an isolated spot, forcefully removed her jeans, and raped her. He was convicted and sent to jail, but appealed the decision years later. In February of 1999 the Italian Supreme Court overturned the conviction and released the man, with the reasoning that because the girl's jeans were tight, she must have helped to remove them, thus indicating that the sex was consensual.

The following day, six female members of the Italian Parliament protested on the government building steps, wearing jeans and holding signs that said, "Jeans: An Alibi for Rape". The story was picked up by the international press, leading Patti Giggans, Executive Director of Peace Over Violence, to develop the first Denim Day event in Los Angeles in April 1999.

Since that first local event, the Denim Day Campaign has spread throughout the US and is recognized in over 50 countries, educating people and allowing them to show support for sexual assault survivors. The event is an opportunity to encourage discussion about and to correct destructive attitudes and myths that surround sexual violence.

Denim Day is the longest running sexual violence prevention and education campaign in history, and it is a great opportunity for advocates to promote awareness in their communities.

So, how does Denim Day work? We are asking community members, elected officials, business owners, and students to wear jeans on Wednesday, April 29 as a visible means of protest against the harmful misconceptions about sexual violence. Many businesses and agencies will allow their employees to wear jeans for a fee, and then donate that money to a local domestic and sexual violence agency.

Help us to spread the word as you see notices on social media; once a flyer is developed, you can help us by taking it to any businesses that are still open and asking them to participate in this important awareness event!

Current Needs

- **33 gal. strong trash bags**
- **Disinfectant wipes**
- **All-purpose liquid cleaner (like PineSol)**
- **Paper towels**

Survivor Story

Pierre Chambers

This month's survivor is not a celebrity, not a public figure, not a household name; he is a leader in his church, a father, a musician, and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Chambers' story of abuse began in a Black Pentecostal church when he was 12 years old. His perpetrator was the youth pastor, who was a very influential, charismatic leader in their church, and also a close family friend.



Chambers' family was very involved with the church, and Chambers also was very dedicated. He wanted to learn as much as he could about the faith, so thought that the attention given to him by this church leader was a normal part of that process. The youth pastor showered him with gifts, privileges, and increasing amounts of time spent alone with him. He would take Chambers' side during disagreements with his parents, inviting Chambers to spend the night at his house. This grooming process lasted for several years, during which time Chambers' parents began to question the nature of their relationship, but Chambers denied that there was any problem. He was afraid to tell anyone because he didn't want to get in trouble or cause problems within the church family.

Finally, before a scheduled weekend youth retreat, Chambers told his parents that he was in a relationship with his youth pastor; because of the grooming process, that was how Chambers viewed the abuse. His parents recognized it as abuse, took him to get a sexual assault forensic exam, and reported it to the police. The perpetrator pled guilty to childhood sexual abuse and was sentenced to 7 years in prison.

Chambers has authored a memoir, *I Trusted You*, and is a passionate advocate for eliminating child sexual abuse. "Sexual abuse isn't talked about in many black communities and church communities. That's why I share my story, so that someone else out there knows that they aren't alone."

Around the Shelter

Sometimes it's nice to take a walk around the shelter and see some special touches. Here are some shots from staff offices as well as common areas; they range from client artwork, to patchwork quilts donated by church groups, to inspirational pieces. Enjoy!



Recap of Events

TDVAM—Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month



Remember Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month back in February?? So, here are some pictures of the finished restrooms at CHS! There are plans to paint some additional restrooms, so hopefully we'll have some more pictures to show in future newsletters.

We're so lucky to have a TAB club that is willing to give up their Friday evenings to improve the environment in their school. Those students are good advocates for their peers!



Upcoming Events

SAAM and CAPM

SAAM - (Sexual Assault Awareness Month) - is all about awareness and prevention of sexual assault, harassment, and abuse. The theme for SAAM is "I Ask", which is a chance for us to spread the word that asking for consent is a healthy, normal, and necessary part of relationships. We will be creating a display in the window at Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce, so check it out next time you're in town!

Please note that, like most other events, the pinwheel planting events scheduled for the beginning of April in recognition of **CAPM (Child Abuse Prevention Month)** have all been cancelled. We will notify on social media, email, website, etc. if we are able to reschedule the pinwheel gardens. Stay tuned!

Sooooo.....Covid-19 arrived at our busiest time of year, of course! Most of the events that we had scheduled for April are no longer happening—The fashion show, the free family movie, several outreach events....However, there are still some ways that you can support Response:

- Spread the word about Denim Day—Wed., April 29.
- Share any Facebook posts that you find interesting, especially to help get the word out about SAAM and CAPM.
- Continue being a good advocate by talking about Response and the services we offer to folks in the community!

Shelter Staffing Update

Just an FYI that we have temporarily changed our office staffing operations, which might affect our response times to phone calls, emails, etc. We will have a staff member manning the hotline 24 hrs., but we are staggering in-office hours and those are not consistent with our normal business hours. If you need to contact us, email is probably the best, but you may call the hotline at 540-459-5161 as well. Thanks for understanding as we try to limit virus exposure to staff and clients while remaining committed to our mission.