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Sexual assault affects all New Yorkers as survivors, and as co-survivors who have shared the pain of our partners, friends and families. This hidden crime continues to disrupt the lives of thousands of New Yorkers each year, yet it only surfaces publicly when an incident involves a celebrity, a church conspiracy, or other "sensational" circumstances, in which the survivor's life is either exploited or ignored.

But sexual assault manifests itself in countless ways. The abuse is committed by friends, partners, family members, strangers and colleagues. It is committed across the lifespan against children, adolescents, adults and elderly persons. And thousands upon thousands of survivors carry a misplaced and needless burden of guilt and shame. Misplaced because rapists, not their victims, deserve the blame for the crimes they commit. Needless because together as a community, we can remove that burden by sending a clear message to every survivor: "it's not your fault."

As a society, our inaction perpetuates the violence. When we fail to speak out against rape, our silence forces survivors to feel isolated and powerless. Many survivors say that when they told their story, the reaction of family, friends or authorities felt like a second assault, that the interrogation by those they had gone to for support was a

revictimization. By knowing how to listen, by rejecting rape myths that blame the victim, by listening with open minds and hearts to survivors, we can begin to create a society in which sexual assault is no longer tolerated.

This year the Alliance and the city's Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) Organizing Committee is planning a 24 hour reading of survivor stories in City Hall Park. The 24 hour event will start on Tuesday, April 13 at 12 noon and finish at 12 noon the following day.

The event is called "Listen: 24 Hours of Survivors' Stories." Our goal is to read 1,000 testimonials by survivors of sexual assault. The number is particularly appropriate for SAAM. Because the Alliance estimates that 12,000 sexual assaults occur each year in New York City, we estimate that one twelfth of this estimate, or one thousand stories, represents one month of the year.

The stories that we will read at this event have been published in books and websites. For many survivors, this will be the first time their words are spoken out loud. For many more, it will be the first time their words are not met with contempt and doubt. By reading and listening to these stories, we send a message to all survivors that their experiences are real, their anger justified, and their safety and support paramount.

Does Zero Tolerance Mean Zero Dollars for Services?

New York City provides zero city dollars for services for adult survivors. The trickle of funding from the city to treat child sexual abuse is barely a drop in the bucket. As a result, the city's network of free services relies almost exclusively on state resources. Fewer than one in four hospitals have rape crisis programs, and only 9 out of 66 have a specialized sexual assault examiner program in their emergency departments. Survivors languish on waiting lists for counseling services, or wait hours on end in emergency rooms for acute care. Providers have no referrals for free longer-term care. Services are unavailable in certain languages. Large geographic areas of the city have no services at all.

The Alliance is dedicated to advocating for increased resources for services for survivors, particularly in underserved areas or communities. At the December 2003 quarterly meeting, service providers and others underscored this priority. We welcome allies and partners interested in securing this assistance and will continue to update readers on our efforts to obtain increased funding for city services in the future.

City Council to Hold Hearings on Sexual Assault

Women's Issues Committee will Kick Off the Series

Even though Sexual Assault Awareness Month occurs in April, sexual violence is an unending, ever-consuming problem that affects all people as survivors, co-survivors and bystanders. No person is safe from sexual violence. It can happen anywhere at anytime, which is why sexual assault should not only be recognized one month out of the year, but should be addressed on an ongoing basis.

In an effort to make fighting sexual assault a year long activity, the City Council, in collaboration with the Alliance and the Speaker's Office, will hold a series of hearings as a substantive way to address sexual assault throughout the year.

The kickoff hearing will be held by the Women's Issues Committee, and will take place on April 14th at 12pm, at City Hall. Chaired by Tracy Boyland, the Committee hearing will be a time to learn about how sexual assault affects women, their families and their communities throughout the lifespan, as children, adolescents, adults and elderly people.

Other committee chairs will be tapped

for subsequent hearings, including the Youth, Mental Health and Hygiene, Health, General Welfare, and Public Safety committees. The series of hearings will provide each committee the opportunity to address sexual violence in their particular area of oversight. The intended result of these hearings is to create a blueprint for further advocacy, education and research to prevent sexual violence and assist the survivors of these crimes.

Listen. Campaign is Launched

One woman in four will be raped. Every one of us knows dozens of men and women who have survived sexual assaults. But we almost never talk about rape. It's so common, but so uncomfortable, that we tend to avoid the subject. It makes it into the news from time to time — when it involves a priest, or a basketball player, or a famous musician, or a politician. And we talk about it occasionally — when it affects a friend or loved one who trusts us deeply.

The Alliance is proud to announce a new campaign which will attempt to raise the visibility of sexual assault. We're focusing on conversations people have about assault. Specifically, we ask participants to think back on their lives and count the number of times that somebody has told them about experiencing a sexual assault.

The campaign is being launched as one of our SAAM activities. It can be found online at listencampaign.org. Please come visit, and please tell your friends.

In their factsheet on “how to help a friend,” the National Center for Victims of Crime says that one of the most important things you can do is: “just listen—let your friend vent and don’t try to have answers for everything.” Survivors need to know that there is somebody who will hear them. And as individuals and as a society, we need to learn to listen to survivors. That’s why we’ve named our campaign simply “listen.”

Help Cut Out Abuse!

LICH Rape Crisis Program Holds Workshops for Salon Professionals

In an effort to raise community awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault, The Long Island College Hospital Rape Crisis Intervention/Victims of Violence Program is holding their first ever *Help Cut Out Abuse* workshops. To promote the fact that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month RCIP/VOVP is bringing together hairdressers, nail technicians, and massage therapists – professionals in the Brooklyn community who may be in contact with victims on a very regular basis. Three workshops, which will be held during the week of April 29, 2004, will be conducted to educate these professionals and teach them the skills to become valuable information and referral sources.

The Rape Crisis Intervention Victims of Violence Program (RCIP/VOVP) of the Long Island College Hospital assists in the recovery of sexual assault/abuse victims and domestic violence victims

in Brooklyn utilizing the *Best Practice Model* to enhance victim care and healing. Through the provision of comprehensive direct service, RCIP/VOVP creates a strong supportive environment for the survivors of sexual assault/abuse and domestic violence as well as aiding in the prevention of sexual assault/abuse and domestic violence. The services are confidential and completely free of charge to the poor and undeserved. RCIP/VOVP offers 24/7 coverage in the Emergency Department for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, utilizes the Sexual Assault Examiners Program to give the best care to survivors of sexual assault, provides short and long-term counseling to those 12 years and older, and performs extensive educational workshops to the community about abuse. The *Help Cut Out Abuse* workshops were formed as part of the program’s continued effort to outreach to the community about abuse.

The foundation behind the project is that clients share very personal information and experiences with their beauticians. Trusting relationships are formed as stories are shared about family, work, and life experiences. These professionals take on many roles for their clients such as being interested in their wellness, being experienced listeners, and being called on for advice. The *Help Cut Out Abuse* workshops will provide an opportunity for beauticians to take these roles one-step further in helping their current and future clients.

One male hairstylist who contacted LICH’s program after receiving his invitation stated he is looking forward to the workshop. After being in the business for over twenty years he reported hearing too many stories of violence to count. The RCIP/VOVP hopes this response is an indication of the community’s desire for such a workshop. We hope that this groundbreaking event will become an annual campaign!

What New Yorkers Can Do to End Sexual Assault

Through our activities and events, the Alliance has learned that many people are interested in sexual violence issues but do not know how to help. People were finding inadequate opportunities to get involved in fighting sexual violence in their communities. Additionally, Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a growing but still small movement in New York City. The Alliance addresses these issues in a new brochure titled, “What New Yorkers Can Do to End Sexual Violence.” The audience for the brochure is individuals who want to get involved, but do not know where to start.

“What New Yorkers Can Do to End Sexual Violence” outlines ways to be a part of the solution, such as learning the myths and facts about rape, supporting a friend in crisis, understanding legislative issues that affect survivors, and supporting local rape crisis programs by volunteering or charitable donations. It encourages individuals to speak out about bad journalism that exploits survivors, to become a trained rape crisis advocate, or to join the NYC Sexual Assault Awareness Month Organizing Committee.

To order copies of the brochure, or to learn more about getting involved in NYC’s movement to end sexual assault, contact the Alliance at 212-523-4344 or e-mail saam@nycagainstrape.org.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month!

SAAM Calendar, April 2004

Survivor's Movie Night: *Monsoon Wedding*

April 2, 6:30pm

St. Vincent's Hospital Rape Crisis Program

(212) 604-8068

Sexual Assault Prevention: Programming on College Campuses

April 10, 11am- 4pm

Bard College and Sarah Lawrence College

(845)758-7557, or (914)395-2599

Listen: 24 Hours of Survivors Stories

April 13th, 12pm through 14th, 12pm

New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault.

(212)523-4344, speakout@nycagainstrape.org

19th Annual Candlelight Vigil

April 18, 2pm

NYS Attorney General Eliot Spitzer & The Downstate Coalition For Crime Victims

(212) 416-8839

Help Cut Out Abuse! Workshops for Salon Professionals

April 19, 10-12pm; April 21, 4-6pm; April 23, 12-2:30pm

Long Island College Hospital

Andrea Bergbower, CSW at (718) 780-4623 or

Sharon Laconte, CSW at (718) 780-1910

NYSCASA's Legislative Awareness Day (Albany, NY)

April 20th, 6:15am-6:30pm

NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault

(212)523-4344, fhuckel@nycagainstrape.org

New York City's Response to Sexual Violence

April 27, 9am-5pm

The Criminal Justice Collaboration Project

New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

(212)523-4344

More events at www.nycagainstrape.org/SAAM

Join the SAAM Organizing Committee!

The Alliance's Sexual Assault Awareness Month Organizing Committee raises awareness about victims' rights and needs, fosters discussion about sexual assault and provides opportunities to reach out to victims. The committee is dedicated to ensuring that awareness efforts are accessible and relevant to the many cultural, ethnic, racial and other groups that make up the city community. Local rape crisis center staff, community educators, grass roots activists and concerned individuals are encouraged to join.

Contact: 212-523-4344,

saam@nycagainstrape.org