

April is Sexual Violence Awareness Month

James House hosting fundraisers, displaying information

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More than 30 years ago, Virginia's first rape crisis centers were organized by small groups of people outraged by the treatment of rape victims. The problem of sexual violence was narrowly defined – the rape of an adult woman by a stranger – and perceived as a woman's issue. Today, we know that sexual violence must be more broadly defined. It not only includes the rape of adult women but also the sexual victimization of young girls and boys and adult men. It is estimated that one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys will be sexually victimized before their 18th birthday. As many as 80 percent of these children will be victimized by someone they know and trust – a parent, grandpar-

ent, uncle, brother, family friend, teacher, etc.

Sexual violence exacts a high price that is paid by everyone in our community. Physical violation and emotional anguish are immediate after an assault. However, the long-term consequences can be as devastating and destructive to the individual and to the community. As awareness increases, the price to society for continued sexual violence becomes more evident. Research findings are disturbing. Between 70 percent and 80 percent of adult sex offenders were sexually abused as children. Over 70 percent of sex workers, teen run-aways and women with substance abuse issues had been a victim of incest or rape when they were children. Over 50 percent of pregnant teens and those in residential mental health treatment were victims of child sexual abuse.

During the month of April, The James House is sponsoring several events to raise awareness about sexual violence and its impact not only on the victim, but on families, friends, co-workers, and the community as a whole.

On April 8, "Expressions; The Invisible Girl," an art installation exhibit that tells the story of one woman's experience of multiple rapes, was held at the Petersburg Area Art League. A Silent Auction was held in conjunction with the exhibit.

Denim Day will be observed on April 28. For a small donation to The James House, employees wear jeans or a small denim lapel pin to work that day to help spread the word about sexual violence. Denim Day is fun, easy, cost-free to the employer and allows individuals who often ask, "What can one person do?" to make a difference.

In addition to these two fundraising events, Go Figure ... figures displaying information and statistics about sexual violence will be placed throughout the community.

To sign up for Denim Day or to host the Go Figure ... figures, contact Jane Clayborne at 804-458-2704.

The James House provides cost-free, confidential, accredited services for people in the Tri-Cities and surrounding counties who have been impacted by sexual and/or domestic



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Above: The Petersburg Parks and Leisure Services participated in the 2010 Denim Day in support of the James House mission. Below: The Retreat Spa in Petersburg also participated in the 2010 Denim Day. Denim Day 2011 will be observed on April 28. For a small donation to The James House, employees wear jeans or a small denim lapel pin to work that day to help spread the word about sexual violence.

violence. If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, call our 24-hour hotline at 804-458-2840.

Sexual violence can end in our communities if each one of us takes an active part in finding solutions. Strengthening communities, empowering people, making a difference. It starts with you!

