

**March 14, 2014**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH OBSERVED**

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc.'s (MHA) Rape Crisis Services Program is declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. During this month, this agency will be joining with people throughout the state and the nation to focus the public's attention on this important issue. The theme for 2014 is "Prevent Teen Dating Violence".

Sexual violence is a crime of epidemic proportions. It affects everyone. 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At least 80% of sexual assault and rape are perpetrated by someone the victim knows.

The Orange County Rape Crisis Program is the only program of its kind in the area providing cutting edge, sensitive and specialized services to sexual assault victims and their families. Services include:

- 24 hour Rapeline offering access to crisis intervention
- telephone counseling
- information and referral
- rape crisis advocates who respond on a 24 hour basis to accompany sexual assault victims to hospital emergency rooms, police departments and courtrooms
- prevention education
- professional in-service training
- clinical support groups for victims
- S.A.N.E. (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) Program, a collaborative project among MHA, Orange Regional Medical Center, St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital and the Orange County District Attorney's Office .

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners are specially trained forensic examiners who conduct evidentiary examinations and provide expert testimony in court.

Local activities which aim to raise awareness of sexual violence include:

- 4/2/14 SUNY Orange Wellness Fair 10am-2pm  
Middletown Campus  
115 South Street, Middletown, NY
- 4/3/14 West Point Walk A Mile  
West Point Military Academy
- 4/4/14 Sexual Assault Awareness Month Proclamation 10am  
Orange County Legislative Session  
Emergency Services Center  
22 Wells Farm Road, Goshen, NY
- 4/8/14 Orange County Coalition for Crime Victim's Rights 6:30pm  
Cornwall High School  
10 Dragon Drive, Cornwall NY
- 4/11/14 Clothesline Project 10am-2pm  
Veteran's Park-Orange Square  
Port Jervis, NY
- 4/30/14 Make a T-Shirt Take a T-Shirt 2pm - 4pm  
Empowering Port Jervis  
11 Fowler Street, Port Jervis, NY

The Clothesline Project and Make a T-Shirt Take a T-Shirt are collaborative efforts between MHA Rape Crisis and City of Port Jervis Police Department.

For more information on Sexual Assault Awareness Month, contact Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. at (845) 342-2400 Extension 250.

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, confidential help is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-832-1200.

In addition, MHA offers a confidential texting line for teens, Text 4 Teens, which can be reached at (845)391-1000, Monday-Thursday 4pm-9pm, Friday 4pm-12am and Saturday-Sunday 5pm-12am.

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