

Sounds of Survival

Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass & Hubbard Counties

From Victim to Survivor!



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While being an advocate for victims of sexual violence can be a difficult job, it has tremendous rewards. The transformation from victim to survivor can take a long time, and we have the opportunity to be present for our clients on every step of their journey. Sometimes we don't know how far we've come until we take a look backwards and look at where we've been. I had one such experience recently, when I realized that I indeed was looking at a victim turned survivor, and well on her way to being a "Thrifer".

"Yea", she said, "I can see it too. I'm not the same person I used to be. I'm better". When I asked her permission to celebrate her in our newsletter, she jumped at the chance. I asked her what she would want to tell people, to help them understand sexual violence better. This is what she had to say; "You learn growing up that if something like this [sexual violence] happens to you, you're supposed to TELL somebody, but the voice inside says **YOU CAN'T! IT'S NOT SAFE! IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET!** But now I can talk about it. It took a long time for me to say, 'YES, this DID happen and I don't want it to happen anymore'".

A while back we received a stockpile of stuffed animals from two generous community agencies that sponsored teddy bear drives. My client chose a big fluffy bear. "I still hug it every night" she said, "It helps me feel so not alone". One day I had to re-schedule our appointment because I had a court trial at the same time we usually met. She asked if the person I was going to help had a teddy bear yet. "No, not yet" I said. She responded, "Can I pick one out for her?" When I asked her what she would want to share with this other person she didn't know, she said, "Please tell her she is not alone, it happened to me too, and it will get better." That day I was able to not only hand over a teddy bear to someone who really could use it, but also a message that came from the heart of another victim; "**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**". That was a powerful gift that just an advocate alone couldn't give. This is the journey of a victim turning survivor.

"Any words of advice for other victims out there?" I asked her. She responded, "**Yea, It DOES change, working through it [sexual violence], even though it is HARD TO DO, IT CHANGES YOUR LIFE FOR THE BETTER.**" These are the awesome words of a former victim turned survivor, well on her way to becoming a **THRIVER!**

The Vision of the Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass & Hubbard Counties is to provide support for all victims of all levels of sexual violence, to educate the community about the issues of sexual violence, and to promote changes in attitudes and behaviors that will stop sexual violence

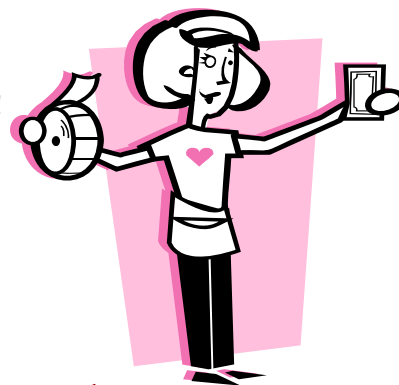
SAP holds a Fifty Fifty Raffle

On August 31, SAP held it's first 50/50 raffle. Tickets were only one dollar! There can only be three winners and here they are...

First Prize goes to Paul Kvale of Bemidji

Second Prize goes to Chris Johnson of Bemidji

Third Prize went to Bill Krotzer of Bemidji



CHAT

"To ensure victim centered response through effective coordination, cooperation and communication across the community and partner agencies."

In addition to creating a mission statement the CHAT teams have begun reviewing B-SMART's protocols to either adopt as their own or use as a template.

We had a change of coordinators in May. Kim Zimmerman, a current CHAT team member has taken the position.

Both teams have been attempting to fit the CHAT meetings into their busy work lives while trying to manage budget cuts and position changes in every agency. Kim has been working with all team members to find ways to make it easier for people to commit to the meetings. Both teams agreed that shortening the meeting times was a crucial component in the commitment. Hubbard County was able to keep the same date but just shorten the meeting time beginning in July. Cass County is still struggling finding a suitable time.

The teams are working on the Law Enforcement protocols. Cass County may draft their own. Hubbard County has approved the law Enforcement protocol as is with the addition of the Sheriff's office picking up "unreported" rape kits from St. Josephs hospital. Kits will be marked with a patient number rather than a victim's name to identify the kit and keep them in storage for up to a year, to give the victim time to decide if they want to report the crime. If they do, law enforcement would contact the hospital with the patient number and the hospital would then release any other information needed including the victims name.

Both teams have been given the DOC protocol to look over. If there are any changes, it is a long process to get those changes made. The teams were also introduced to the Prosecution Protocol.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2012, we will be "celebrating" our 35th year of existence. In September 1977, we were known as the Beltrami County Sexual Assault Task Force. Although our "her" story documents that we have been advocating for victims for 35 years, we also have been conducting educational presentations such as training security staff at Bemidji State University and writing letters to the editor as well. Look for events next year to commemorate the 35 years of SAP!



B-SMART CORNER

SAP PROGRAM EVALUATION

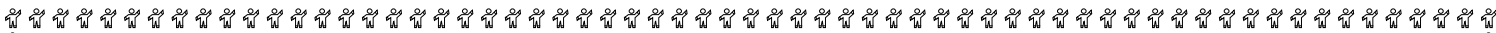
Our new coordinator who was a current BSMART member (Kim Zimmerman) spent some time with Leah & Sharon from SVJI getting up to speed, where BSMART was going and what the new role as coordinator entails. With the change of coordinators, it seemed to be a perfect time to reach out to the BSMART members and get their input of where we are, where we are going and what they need to stay invested. Kim worked with Leah and Sharon and a survey was created and distributed to team members. The June meeting was cancelled so members could take the survey, and we would have time to compile the results for the July meeting, which was also cancelled due to the state shutdown. We received many surveys back and team members went over the results at the August meeting. It was clear with the survey results that once the hard work of the protocols was written, people were unclear of where we went from there. The team members present came up with a few goals: creating a satisfaction survey for victims to fill out regarding their experience with any agencies they had contact. Members realize that the survey needs to be quick and easy but also able to pull out the valuable information needed so we can access our progress in working with victims successfully.

At the next meeting several people will bring examples of surveys and we will work on creating our own and deciding how best to distribute them.



Thanks to assistance from the Minnesota Council of Non-profits' Performance Management Leadership Institute and the Improve Group,

the Sexual Assault Program is going to be undertaking a Program Evaluation Project this fall. Some of you may be contacted by our Executive Director and or Social Work students from Bemidji State (who will actually be conducting the interviews and distributing surveys, etc.). We would sure appreciate your honest feedback about how we are doing, what new projects or programs you think we should tackle, what we are doing well and on what items we could yet improve. Please contact Cassandra at the Bemidji office if you have more questions or would like to schedule a time to participate. 444-9524.



Anishinabe Equay Program Update

Boozhoo! I am Aurora Conley, the new Anishinabe Equay Program Coordinator. I was welcomed to Sexual Assault Program in June and have been gearing up for fall activities, getting to know the community, training and preparing to represent and advocate with SAP. I was able to attend the last of Sacred Circles Women Are Sacred Conference in early August and was able to network, learn and meet so many other Indigenous people working with social and human services. It was a great honor to be able to attend. In early October we are looking to start our beading circle with any and all projects welcome. The Minnesota Indian Women's Coalition Barrette Project is still underway and we are looking forward to contributing! We're also looking into talking circle collaborations here in the Bemidji area for women of all ages starting in late September, early October. I am also the new Volunteer/Advocacy Services Coordinator with SAP, and we are always looking for volunteer advocates and office help! It's been an experience being in training and getting to know our crew of volunteers and we hope to welcome more. If you or someone you know would be interested- feel free to call our office and inquire! We are busy with the new school season and will be training advocates in early October! Come join us as we embark on a healing journey. Ever Forward~



Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass & Hubbard Counties

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United Way
of Bemidji Area

Mark Your Calendar

August 2011

- *Monday, August 29, 2011* SAP Board Mtg
- *Wednesday, August 31, 2011* - DRAWING for the SAP 50/50 Raffle

September - October , 2011

- Annual United Way Campaign
- *Wednesday, September 21* - United Way Chili Cook-off - Paul Bunyan Mall.
- *Thursday, September 22* - United Way Business Blitz
- *Monday, September 26* - SAP Board Mtg

April 2012~SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH & Child Abuse Prevention Month

- *Thursday, April 12, 2012* 30th Annual TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, Bemidji



Thanks to the BABE CITY ROLLERS for their support this past year. Look for SAP next year at one of their local Bouts!