

Sounds of Survival

Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass & Hubbard Counties

IS IT TOO LATE?

A conversation with a biology major about polluted lakes recently caught my interest. I was shocked to learn that a lake could actually die from being so toxic. Perhaps “going green” is a philosophy I should consider more strongly. When a lake is damaged so badly, is there any way that it can come back to the fresh waters and healthy fish that we once witnessed? I was also shocked to learn that the answer was “yes”. A lake can indeed make a come back, it takes strong intervention efforts, and time. What a hopeful symbol for our toxic society, a beautiful summer lake. With intervention efforts and time, we too can turn our society from the everyday normalization of pornography and violence against women using sex, to a clean, respectful, non-“polluted” environment.



What’s so bad about “adult” materials?

Sexual exploitation of women and children has become mainstreamed. Materials that once were regulated through zoning restrictions (adult book stores) are now available at gas stations, mainstream bookstores and hotels. Use of, and dependence upon, violent pornography is associated with higher rates of sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation. Prolonged exposure to pornography results in a “loss of respect” for female sexual autonomy and in greater risk of expression of aggression against women. Repeated exposure to pornography also fosters the acceptance of the notion that women are subservient to men and promotes an adversarial, distrustful relationship between the sexes.

What does this have to do with our environment?

Sex sells, therefore products are being marketed using sex. This is nothing new. What is changing however, is the eroding of our tolerance and the acceptance of degradation towards women in our society. Our children are swimming in toxic waters. Pornography is just 2 clicks away, clothing styles for girls fashionably display a low cut jean and “sexy” styles. TV shows created for the American teenager, center around and normalize casual sex so that our children are calloused in their expectations as they mature into adulthood. Even dolls created for a little girl are designed with the ideation of little clothing and popularity as a sex object. My favorite part of this hazardous bio-waste, is the first choice given when staying in some well-known and respected hotels, “would you like to purchase in-room porn today?”

The good news is that with time and intervention efforts, our environment, just like a dying lake, can make a come-back and be alive and clean once more. By taking a good hard look at our society, we begin to open our eyes to our surroundings and stop the erosion of our beliefs and the dumping of waste into the waters of our life. Prevention works. By learning more, you can help stop the cycle of violence. To learn more about primary prevention efforts, log onto www.menaspeacemakers.org/programs/mnman/hotels . Every bit helps. Thanks for doing your part.

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Inside this issue:

SAP is the re- 2
cipient of a Re-
covery Act
Grant for ser-
vices to Native
Survivors

Cow Pie Bingo 2
Results

SAP receives 3
grant from MN
State Bar Foun-

Volunteer / 3
advocate train-
ing in Bemidji

B - S M A R T 3
Corner

TEEVO Update 3

Mark Your 4
Calendar

Cow Pie Bingo Returns to the Beltrami County Fair

Yet another successful Cow Pie Bingo event went off without a hitch (almost) at the Beltrami County Fair on Saturday, August 1, 2009. This year's winners: First Prize to Beverly Warren of Bemidji; Second Prize to Annie Claesson Huseby of Bemidji; Third Prize to Karin Johnson of Bemidji. Many thanks to the local businesses that sold tickets: Bank Forward, KD Floral, both Lueken's Village Foods locations, Bemidji Outdoor Power Equipment. This event would not have been possible without the hard work of Kim and Mike who created the bingo grid, Paul and Joe at the Beltrami County Fair, and Doris the cow and her human family! Watch for us again next year at the Beltrami County Fair.



SAP announces grant to re-establish the Anishinabe Equay Program

Our agency worked with 114 NEW primary sexual violence victims from October 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009. Of those 114 victims, 53 identified as American Indian. That is nearly half of all our new clients.

From the Amnesty International report, *Maze of Injustice*, we know that “Alaska Native and American Indian women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the USA in general.” A recent study done by the US Department of Justice “concluded that 34.1 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women...will be raped in their lifetime.” Human trafficking, and in particular sex trafficking, is also a growing concern for our area. Although there has not been any data collected thus far, anecdotal evidence has suggested that girls as young as 12 are being trafficked into prostitution (MN Indian Women's Resource Center).



Recognizing the need for action, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Justice Programs recently awarded Recovery Act grants to address violence against Native American women. The Sexual Assault Program was one of four programs in the state to receive this one-time funding. Our board and staff are very happy to be able to re-establish our Anishinabe Equay program. Interviews are currently underway to fill the staff position within SAP that will deal specifically with of American Indian survivors of sexual violence in our unique geographical location. We look forward to partnering with existing agencies and programs to provide support to American Indian communities through advocacy and special trainings, including education, for the specific needs of American Indian Women

SAP receives grant from MN State Bar Foundation

Sexual Assault Program staff were recently notified that we were again selected to receive a grant from the MN State Bar Foundation. This grant will help our advocates provide much needed legal advocacy to sexual assault survivors. Legal advocacy for sexual assault survivors may take many forms: assisting a survivor with obtaining an Order for Protection or a harassment order, accompanying a survivor to criminal or civil court proceedings, assisting a survivor with the often difficult process of composing a Victim Impact Statement to be read at the sentencing of their assailant. Since the Sexual Assault Program covers four counties, advocates in our program must often travel long distances to provide these services. SAP staff and board would like to thank the MN State Bar Foundation for supporting our legal advocacy work for another year.

TEEVO Update

What summer we had is quickly racing to an end, and back to school is right around the corner. With all the excitement of new locker combinations and backpacks and lunch money, is the gearing up for the second year of TEEVO, or Teens Engaged in Ending Violence Overall.



This year our focus is primarily on education and giving Trek North students the information they need to counter our toxic society.

LOOKING TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY?

Advocate training in Bemidji will start soon (after Labor Day). Please spread the word to all you know and if anyone is interested have them contact Kim Zimmerman at sap_kimzim@hotmail.com or 444-9524. We need more volunteers so please spread the word where you work, play and go to school. Volunteer hours are flexible for your schedule. We need volunteers during the day, evenings and overnights. *Don't want to be an advocate? We need office volunteers too! Call for more*

B-SMART CORNER

The B-SMART team has a very productive few months. In May we reviewed the final agency protocol, and even added a few sections. The team created a list of core messages for the beginning of the protocol. These messages are statements we felt were important to maintain consistency throughout each protocol, no matter where the victim enters the criminal justice system. The team decided to prominently display two flow charts in the protocol. One lays out all the reporting options to offer a victim, and the other deals with mandated reports. After two sessions with the editing committee, we are ready to send the project to print! The B-SMART has also been busy planning a meeting with department heads to introduce them to the finished product, talk about how the protocol should be implemented, and to plan trainings to all staff of each agency. The B-SMART team is nearly finished with the 4th step of our 8 step process!



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Mark Your Calendar

September 14 - 15, 2009

- * **MNCASA Annual Meeting and Training Symposium** Sugar Lake Lodge, Grand Rapids, MN, "Honoring our Roots: Community, Consciousness, and Coalitions in a Time of Change"

September 16, 2009

- * **United Way of Bemidji Area's Sizzlin' 70's Sit-coms Chili Cook Off** Paul Bunyan Mall, Bemidji, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

December 3 & 4, 2009

- * **The Minnesota Summit: The High Cost of Sexual Violence. It is your business.** The TIES Building, St. Paul Minnesota

WISH LIST

- ◆ White & colored copy paper
 - ◆ AAA batteries
 - ◆ Postage stamps (.44)
 - ◆ Kleenex & Paper Towels
- ◆ "Courage to Heal" books & workbooks
 - ◆ Kitchen-sized garbage bags
 - ◆ Paper folding machine
- ◆ "Gifts" that we may give to volunteers & as door prizes
 - ◆ Manilla File folders
- ◆ Ink Cartridges (HP 27, 28, 56, 57, 96 & 97)
- ◆ Journals (bound blank) for client usage