



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

April 4, 2013

### **National Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and April 5<sup>th</sup> is National Sexual Assault Awareness Day. Sexual violence affects every member of the community, and it will take everyone in the community working together to end sexual violence. Tackling this issue may seem like an insurmountable task, but this is an issue that must be confronted. This community and every person in it are far too important to tolerate sexual violence in any form.

Citizens need to recognize that the first and most important step to be taken to help prevent and end sexual violence is to **NOT** remain silent. Talk to your children, your family, and your coworkers about respect and equality in relationships. Believe and support victims of sexual assault. Often times the victims know their assailant or are related to their assailant. Most sexual assaults occur either at the victim's or assailant's home or in a place the assailant is familiar with.

Here are some ways that you can help prevent sexual assault:

- Educate yourself and others on the realities of sexual assault.
- Be mindful of your words. They are powerful, and could contribute to a culture that normalizes sexual assault.
- Don't be a bystander. Speak up when you hear or see things that you aren't comfortable with. Opportunities to intervene range from inappropriate comments or jokes to situations that are potentially dangerous.
- Stay safe, alert, and connected in order to protect yourself and others. Use the buddy system when you're unsure about the safety of a situation. Mobile apps like [Circle of 6](#), which use GPS coordinates and 6 of your most trusted friends, help you to stay connected should you ever need to reach out for help.
- Be supportive to those who speak out about their experiences with sexual assault. We want our community to be a safe place for open dialogue.
- Remember that men and women are allies in the efforts to end sexual violence. While most acts of sexual violence are perpetrated by men, this does not mean that all men are

perpetrators. Men can also be victims of sexual violence, and many men are outspoken advocates for survivors and for prevention.

“The St. Mary’s County Bureau of Criminal Investigations partners with many local groups to help raise public awareness and combat sexual violence.” (Captain Terry Black, Commander, Bureau of Criminal Investigations) There are a number of confidential helplines for those affected by sexual assault. If you need support after an incident, or simply need to talk, these lines are available to help:

[Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Program](#) operates a 24-hour crisis hotline, where individuals can call to reach a trained sexual assault response and prevention advocate anytime at (301) 741-3442.

[Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network](#) (RAINN) offers free confidential access to their 24-hour national hotline. You can access this hotline [online](#), or call 1-800-656-HOPE (4673).

[www.waldensierra.org](http://www.waldensierra.org) Walden-Sierra, Inc. 21770 FDR Blvd. Lexington Park, MD 20653  
Tel: (301) 997-1300 Hotline: (301) 863-6661 V/TTY