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Governor Bevin Proclaims April Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Kickoff event spotlights prevention efforts

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 31, 2016) – The prevention and advocacy efforts of several individuals were highlighted today as part of the kickoff of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

The Capitol Rotunda event was cosponsored by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) and the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs (KASAP). At the ceremony, Governor Matt Bevin signed a proclamation declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Kentucky.

“Sexual assault affects people from all walks of life,” said Governor Bevin. “It forever impacts the lives of not only the victims, but their families and friends. It is important we recognize those devoted individuals and groups who work daily to stop the violence and promote education. They make the difference in our response to this crisis and map the way for driving these violent acts out of our great state.”

Adria Johnson, commissioner of the CHFS Department for Community Based Services, said collaboration between government agencies like hers and KASAP is instrumental in improving awareness.

“Our staff has a duty to protect Kentuckians,” she said. “And with KASAP and other advocacy groups, we can work together to promote the kind of social change that will end sexual violence.”

KASAP Executive Director Eileen Recktenwald said ending sexual violence requires both intervention and prevention.

“It’s all about being responsive,” she said. “We have to be there with services for survivors, but we can also find the communities and populations where sexual violence is more prevalent and take our message there. We will see behavioral changes, which should lead to lower sexual crime rates.”

Recktenwald also said the voices of support have gotten stronger.

“No longer can anyone claim to be a bystander to sexual violence,” she said. “We’ve seen a lot more commitment from community groups and leaders who are on board for educating their own staff and stakeholders as well as for helping us get the message out to the general public.”

Recktenwald said that family and friends of assault survivors may get help through the state's network of rape crisis centers centers, and that greater support from government leaders and community partners are building stronger services.

At an awards dinner tonight in Frankfort, four Kentuckians will receive the Sexual Assault Awareness Month Award (SAAMy) for their contributions to end sexual violence.

The winners, who were also recognized at the Rotunda event, are as follows:

Statewide SAAMys

- Phyllis Millsbaugh, Branch Manager, Substance Abuse Prevention, CHFS Department for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Frankfort
- Sen. Whitney Westerfield, Hopkinsville

Regional SAAMy

- Amanda Corzine, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), University of Louisville Hospital, Louisville

Fonetta Elam Award

- Crystal Newton, former volunteer, therapist and board member, New Beginnings, Owensboro

For the third year, the Fonetta Elam Award honors excellence in clinical supervision and pays tribute to Elam, who was director of the Prestonsburg Rape Victim Services Program and provided services to domestic violence and sexual assault victims for more than 30 years. Elam died in January 2013. Recktenwald said this award emphasizes the importance of supervised clinical work in the area of victim services and to reward and recognize the effort of exemplary professionals in that field.

SAAMy Innovative Programs

- EyeAm: Visual Photography, Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center
- Equine Assisted Survivors of Trauma Therapy (EASTT), Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center
- Holistic Coaching Program, Purchase Area Sexual Assault Child Advocacy Center
- Healing Place Sexual Assault Shelter, MCCC-Healing Program

Two military officers based in the Kentucky National Guard (KYARNG) were also recognized for their work in sexual assault prevention. The U.S. Department of Defense has honored Sgt. Joshua Kemp for his participation in mentoring programs and for developing a Safe Helpline wrap for government vehicles. SFC Darrell Brookins is honored by the KYARNG for his work as an advocate to sexual assault victims.

For more information about the sexual assault prevention programs and services and Sexual Assault Awareness Month, please visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/violenceprevention.htm> or <http://www.kasap.org/SAAM.html>.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.