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**WCASA REACTS TO STUDENT SILENCING**

June 18, 2010, Madison, WI – Last week, a story was posted by Dan Richter of the *Wausau Daily Herald* regarding an incident at Mosinee High School involving five students who had handmade T-shirts confiscated by acting Associate Principal Dennis Kaczor. The T-shirts bore the words “Stop Abuse” with a stop sign on the front, and various statistics related to sexual assault on the back. These T-shirts had apparently caused some complaints from other students.

For the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), its member organizations, service providers, and allies, it is a clear indication of the need for more education and discussion on the topic, not less. WCASA is a statewide coalition incorporated in 1985 to support and complement the work of Wisconsin’s community-based sexual assault service providers (SASP’s) and other organizations working to end sexual violence.

"Though I haven't spoken with these students personally, I would want them to know they have our support," Jeanie Kurka Reimer, WCASA's Executive Director, stated this (continued)
week when asked about the events in Mosinee. "It's a courageous act to raise this topic in conversation; people who speak out against sexual violence often suffer backlash, victim-blaming, and other social consequences; these young women made sure their peers were aware that this is happening in their community, and they did it in a creative, original way."

In reports, Mr. Kaczor is quoted as saying: “I’m all for educating students on this topic, but I think it should be done during the month of awareness using pamphlets and fliers from an established organization.” Reflecting on this quote, Ms. Kurka Reimer commented, "WCASA exists to support survivors and help increase awareness pointing a path toward prevention, but our work does not supersede the voices in individual communities; the students are the experts when it comes to understanding their experience as adolescents in their community and school in 2010; we want and need their input, their voice to be an intricate part of any work we do if we expect it to be successful in moving the culture forward."

WCASA hopes the school board, school administration, and staff, in league with the students, parents, and community members, will endeavor to keep the channels of communication open and keep this important topic alive, no matter what month it might be. This incident highlights the need for increased training in our schools – for staff, administrators, and teachers, as well as our student body.

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