WCASA, AG, Community Partners Celebrate Denim Day 2011

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Madison, WI | April 22, 2011 – Across the state, Advocates, community activists, survivors of sexual assault and their allies have the blues. Blue jeans, that is... in a symbolic gesture, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), its member agencies and their supporters are donning blue jeans next Wednesday, April 27, in a statewide observance of the national and international event known as Denim Day.

“It all points back to a case in Italy in the late 1990's,” explained Jeanie Kurka Reimer, Executive Director for WCASA, the state-wide coalition incorporated in 1985 to support and complement the work of Wisconsin's community-based sexual assault service providers (SASP's). “The Italian Supreme Court overturned a rape conviction believing that since the victim wore jeans so tight the perpetrator could not have gotten them off without her assistance, in their opinion it was consensual sex.”

“It might sound outrageous, yet in Italy, and all over the world, women and men who are victims of sexual assault continue to be disbelieved and accused of causing the assault due to their behavior – or fashion sense.”

Even the Attorney General and his staff are in on the act.

“When we’ve relaxed the dress code, for example, to cheer on the Packers before Super Bowl Sunday, we did not permit jeans,” Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen said in a written statement to Department of Justice employees. “So, when I say you can wear jeans to work, I am hoping to send a strong message. And on Wednesday, April 27, I invite you to come to work in jeans to observe Denim Day. By wearing denim (yes, that means blue jeans) to work on Denim Day, you will send a strong message by helping to raise awareness of sexual assault and thereby help promote the responses needed to address the problem.”

On April 27th, WCASA encourages people to join them and Attorney General Van Hollen for a ceremony at the State Capitol at noon in the rotunda. “We also ask companies across the state to support their workers in choosing denim for this one day as a visible sign of their commitment to ending violence,” said Ms. Kurka Reimer.

More information can be found at http://www.wcasa.org/pages/Events-SAAM-DenimDay.php.

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