Dear Friends:

We are writing to ask for your help. Every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted. Children under the age of 12 represent 15% of all victims. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, over half of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported. Why? The reasons are many, but victims commonly fear that they will not be believed or that they will be blamed for the assault.

We are asking you to be a voice for these victims. You can help us put an end to victim blaming through an awareness initiative during the month of April known as Denim Day. Denim Day is an international sexual assault prevention and education campaign that began in 1999. An Italian woman was raped by her driving instructor. The perpetrator was convicted of the crime and sentenced to prison. At an appeal hearing, however, the Italian Supreme Court overturned the conviction, reasoning that the victim’s jeans were too tight, that she must have removed them herself, and found that the assault was no longer rape but consensual sex. The verdict motivated women and men throughout Italy- and eventually Europe and the U.S. - to dedicate this day to wear jeans and highlight the misconceptions surrounding sexual assault.

The Denim Day campaign, in partnership with The City of Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, is launching the Persons of Influence initiative. We are asking influential members of our community to join in the campaign; to take a picture of themselves in jeans, and choose one of the enclosed statements that best represent your positive view on supporting survivors of sexual assault. We can also provide a photographer to take the picture.

These pictures will be posted to social media throughout April to coincide with Sexual Assault Awareness Month and promote participation in the nationwide Denim Day activities on April 24th. Photos will also be included in a traveling display to educate the community about the importance of supporting survivors and placing the blame where it belongs— with the perpetrators. Please send your photo to denimdaymilwaukee@hotmail.com or via mail c/o Denim Day Milwaukee, 225 W. Vine, Milwaukee, WI 53212 by March 1st. If you have any questions, please contact Dawn Helmrich at 414-263-8166 or Melinda Hughes at 414-671-4325.

Survivors of sexual assault need people like you to help the community better understand the need to support victims and reduce victim blaming. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom & Kris Barrett
Suggested Positive Support Statements – Denim Day Person of Influence

1. I believe survivors because they have the right to be believed, not blamed.

2. I stand with survivors.

3. I believe survivors.

4. When you believe a survivor, you help them heal.

5. When you believe a survivor, you give them a voice.

6. I believe survivors. Why wouldn’t I?

7. I believe survivors because they shouldn’t have to pay for the perpetrator’s crime.

8. I believe survivors because they deserve justice.

9. I stand with survivors for the sake of their health.

10. I stand with survivors because I want them to know they are not alone.

11. I stand with survivors and put responsibility and blame with the perpetrator.

12. I believe in you.
I BELIEVE SURVIVORS, BECAUSE...
WHY WOULDN'T I.

Denim Day