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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 18, 2014

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## **April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

GRAND RAPIDS – The statistics are startling: someone is sexually assaulted every two minutes in the United States. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This national campaign creates awareness and gives a voice to those that are silent. Working as the *Kent County Sexual Assault Prevention Action Team*, members of the Kent County Health Department, the YWCA West Central Michigan, and Family Futures have partnered with the Lantern Coffee Bar and Lounge in Grand Rapids to promote awareness.

This year's campaign focuses on healthy sexuality and young people. "No one likes to talk about, read about, or hear about rape, child sexual abuse, and other forms of sexual violence," says Patti Haist, Director of Clinical Services and Nurse Examiner Program for the YWCA West Central Michigan. "By raising awareness of this crime, we understand that victims need to be believed and supported and that perpetrators of this crime need to be held accountable. We raise awareness by acknowledging how critical it is to teach young people about healthy relationships, self-respect, and respecting others."

Two SAAM Project videographers, Emily McCarty and Lawren Lipscomb, worked together to create a video that challenges the myths of sexual assault. "Victims of sexual assault are often victimized again after coming forward, with accusations suggesting it was the victims fault for dressing a certain way, for drinking alcohol, etcetera," notes Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "Too often, this misplaced blame results in victims blaming themselves, and not coming forward. This needs to stop. The blame belongs with the predator." The link to the video is: <http://goo.gl/ump2my>.

The Lantern Coffee Bar and Lounge\* in Grand Rapids is hosting a photography exhibit, a visual display of local celebrities and community members addressing sexual assault, and informative coffee sleeves made by GVSU students. "Violence is often cyclical, and anything we can do to educate or prevent violence puts a stop to that cycle," says Amber Jones, Advancement Officer for Family Futures. "That's why we always seek to collaborate within the community. It's not just about what you or I do, or any one organization, but what we can all do together to make our community a safer place."

For more information or educational resources on prevention:

Family Futures RAVE program: [www.familyfutures.net/programs/rave](http://www.familyfutures.net/programs/rave)

YWCA West Central Michigan Sexual Assault Services: <http://www.ywcawcmi.org/sa-services.php>

Kent County Health Department Programs: [www.accesskent.com/Health/HealthPromo/assault\\_prevent.htm](http://www.accesskent.com/Health/HealthPromo/assault_prevent.htm)

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

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\*The SAAM display can be seen at:

Lantern Coffee Bar and Lounge  
100 Commerce Ave. SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
P: 616-920-0209  
Hours: 6:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.

Upcoming event information from Lantern owner Rachel Bush:

To celebrate and honor our first year as a local Grand Rapids business, Lantern Coffee Bar and Lounge is teaming up with the YWCA West Central Michigan. Lantern, as a small, intentional business, aims to make Grand Rapids a healthier, more vibrant city in many different ways. One of our most exciting relationships is with the YWCA efforts to raise awareness and support around the issue of sexual assault in our city/region. This year, with the help of many, we've decked out the coffee shop in factoids, myths, truths and visual interpretations that aim to participate in Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Come join us anytime on **April 26th**, our official 1st Birthday, when all Lantern profits will be given to the YWCA. Drinking coffee = a better Grand Rapids!

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