

HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 8, 2015

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## April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

### Partnership Announces New Youth Council to Promote Prevention, Awareness

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 year, the national campaign focuses on awareness and prevention of campus sexual violence. Here in Kent County, a new youth advisory council has been formed for the prevention of relationship and sexual violence. Young Leaders Against Violence (YLAV) is a diverse group of youth, ages 14-22, coordinated through a partnership between the Kent County Health Department, YWCA of West Central Michigan, Safe Haven Ministries and Family Futures. YLAV has several April, 2015 SAAM events planned for their schools and the community.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in five women, and one in 71 men, will be raped/sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. “Reaching out to teens and young adults is crucial,” said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “YLAV is a great way to advocate and educate. Teens may be more open to talking to peers about sexual violence, rather than talking to adults. Reaching out to students while they are in high school and college could have a dramatic impact on education and awareness of this serious public health issue.”

The YWCA of West Central Michigan Sexual Assault Program in Grand Rapids reports that in 2014, 75% of sexual assault victims reported their assailant as someone they know. This rate is even higher for women and men who report being assaulted or raped while in college. The YLAV, in partnership with the coordinating agencies, plans a screening and discussion panel regarding the documentary “The Hunting Ground,” a movie that takes a closer look at rape on college campuses across the country. The screening will be held April 16, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. at Celebration Cinema North (East Beltline and Knapp NE, Grand Rapids). Admission is free.

“The vast majority of the cases of college aged victims who receive a medical forensic examination at the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program involve the use of alcohol by the victim, the offender, or both,” said Patti Haist, Director Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program at the YWCA of West Central Michigan. “A rapist sees intoxication as an opportunity for sexual assault or deliberately supplies alcohol to potential victims to make them vulnerable. The rapist knows that a victim who has used alcohol is less likely to report, less likely to fight back and less likely to call out for help. As a society we need to understand that sexual assault is not the fault of the victim, it is the deliberate targeting of vulnerable people by the rapist that warrants our attention.”

*(more)*

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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**MEDIA NOTE (NOT FOR PUBLICATION/BROADCAST):** Mark and Barbara Gerson, Executive Producers of *The Hunting Ground*, currently live in the Grand Rapids area. They are available for interviews to promote the Grand Rapids Screening on or before April 16. Please contact [Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov) to arrange interviews.

***The Hunting Ground* Screening and Panel Discussion**  
**April 16, 2015 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**  
**Celebration Cinema North**  
**2121 Celebration Dr. NE**  
**Grand Rapids, MI 49525**

Links:

[The Hunting Ground Documentary](#)

[YWCA West Central Michigan Sexual Assault Services](#)

[Kent County Health Department Dating Abuse and Sexual Assault Awareness Programs](#)

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