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### Breaking the silence

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University Park, IL,  
April  
04,  
2022

# Breaking the silence



Silence.

Most survivors of sexual violence were in some way and at some time affected by silence. Whether they were protecting others; fearing that they wouldn't be believed; fearing repercussions from their abuser, or a myriad of other reasons; all survivors have silence in common. April is [Sexual Assault Awareness Month \(SAAM\)](#) and in a month-long series of programming and events to raise awareness about sexual violence, the [Advocating for Sexual Assault Prevention \(ASAP\)](#) Team at Governors State University (GSU) seeks to educate, provide resources, and break the silence.

The month begins with the Clothesline Project Shirt Making event. The Clothesline Project originated in Hyannis, Massachusetts. The purpose of the project is to increase awareness of the impact of violence and abuse, to honor the survivor's strength to continue, and to provide a way for survivors to courageously break the silence that surrounds the experience.

According to Joy Grange, a clinical mental health counselor in the [Counseling & Wellness Center](#) (CWC) and also the Chairperson for ASAP at GSU, “The power of the Clothesline Project is in giving survivors the power to tell their stories. For some, it is the first time they have broken the silence. Some have carried these stories for years, some for decades. It gives them permission to put down their burden.”

At the T-shirt making event, each participant was given a T-shirt and access to materials used to design (or simply write on) the shirt. Then April 1 – 8, the shirts will be displayed in the Hall of Governors. Some of the stories told on these shirts may be disturbing, but according to Grange the intent of this project is to disturb the silence and also disturb the pattern of sexual violence. “This month is about spreading information for everyone to learn about this issue that effects everyone.”

According to the Association of American Universities (AAU), Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct (January 17, 2020), 13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (among all graduate and undergraduate students). Sexual violence is not just an issue for women and girls, the numbers reflect that it is prevalent on college campuses among all demographics.

When asked what message she would like convey to the GSU community, Grange said “It is important to know that sexual assault is preventable and that there are many opportunities in April and beyond (the month of April) to learn about issues related to sexual violence. If you are a victim of sexual violence, you do not have to suffer in silence there are community agencies such as the [YWCA Metro Chicago](#) and [Guardian Angel](#) as well as members of the GSU community that are here to help. Contact the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) to get connected to support and resources.”

“I am working hard to be out of a job,” Grange said. “I would love a world where sexual violence no longer exists”

For more information, as well as campus resources related to sexual violence, please visit [www.govst.edu/asap](http://www.govst.edu/asap).

### **Sexual Assault Awareness Month Events are sponsored by:**

Advocating for Sexual Assault Prevention (ASAP) Team

[www.govst.edu/asap](http://www.govst.edu/asap)

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

[www.ywcachicago.org](http://www.ywcachicago.org)

YWCA Metropolitan RAPE CRISIS HOTLINES:

South Suburbs – 708.748.5672

Chicago – 888.293.2080

Guardian Angel Community Services

[www.gacsprograms.org](http://www.gacsprograms.org)

24/7 Hotline – 815.730.8984

Spanish Speaking Hotline – 815.263.0521

[www.nsvrc.org/SAAM](http://www.nsvrc.org/SAAM)

#SAAM2022