

HAVIN encourages “Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Assault Prevention”

In 1964, the rape and murder of Kitty Genovese shocked Americans from coast to coast. While a man attacked, rapes, and killed this young woman for over half an hour, 38 men and women witnessed the assault and did nothing to help. This event launched new research and programs on the “bystander effect.”

With this bystander approach, people might intervene in less extreme situations, such as saying something at a party when a man is harassing a woman, or supporting a family member when confronting an abusive relative.

The bystander intervention approach is key to finding and expanding the possibilities to stop sexual violence before it is perpetrated. HAVIN (Armstrong County’s Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault center) is working on helping to set the stage for creating new social norms that encourage “standing up” and “speaking up”. Making the change from being a society of passive bystanders to one of engaged and responsible bystanders must begin with individual actions. At one point in our lives, we have all been silent when we are unsure about what to do or say in a situation within our family, our circle of friends or our community. We all know what it feels like to miss an opportunity to help someone and what it feels like to safely say or do something that has a positive impact on someone in our lives. Imagine a time when we will be able to count on our friends and family and those in our community to stand with each other against sexual violence and to actively promote healthy relationships.

In recognition of April being Sexual Assault Awareness Month, HAVIN is offering to provide free programs on engaging bystanders in sexual violence prevention and in preventing sexual violence in your workplace. If you would like to schedule a program for your group or workplace, or would like more information, please contact Laurie at 724-543-1180 ext. 230.

“In the end we will not remember the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Information in this article was obtained from the “Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention” written by Joan Tabachnick and published by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.