

August 2021

The Consent Talk

Special Dates

•Aug 3 NNO -

Strasburg 6-9pm

Mt. Jackson - 5-7pm

New Market - 6-8pm

•Aug. - Looking Forward support group

•Oct. 2 - 5K— Shenandoah Co. Park 9-11am

Current Needs

- Kids' toothpaste
- Black dry erase markers
- Twin size mattress covers



As parents we have many different kinds of “talks” with our children. There might be the birds-and-bees talk, the stranger danger talk, the drugs and alcohol talk, etc. We know that these aren’t actually just one-time conversations, but are important topics that are discussed over the years of raising our kids. As our youth begins heading back to school, it brings to mind another important topic to address with kids - consent.

The first thing to recognize about teaching consent is that it isn’t just about sexuality; our approach to consent should be given in the context of healthy relationships of all kinds. It is about bodily autonomy, safeguarding our boundaries, and respecting the needs and rights of others.

So how do we go about addressing consent?

- ♦ **Make sure your conversation is age appropriate** - Here is a great website to help guide your conversations: <https://www.talkwithyourkids.org/lets-talk-about/healthy-sex-talk-teaching-kids-consent-ages-1-21.html>. Some of the key elements are to teach and demonstrate empathy, to de-mystify and normalize discussion of our bodies, and to directly address bodily autonomy in a sexual context with our older youth.
- ♦ **Focus on feelings** - Fostering emotional intelligence and helping our kids recognize and express their feelings is crucial to understanding consent. To take the awkwardness out of it, we can talk about feelings while doing normal household routines; this can help our children learn that their emotions are important to us and that it is safe to process them. Asking open-ended questions is a good tool for helping kids open up. Demonstrating and talking about our own feelings, especially the uncomfortable ones, is essential to developing emotional intelligence in our children.
- ♦ **Identify boundaries** - Help your child understand that boundaries are different for each of us, and that we can’t assume that what is ok for us is ok for everybody. Some of us like to be tickled, hugged, or have their hair touched, but others don’t. Discussing what our own boundaries are, and accepting that our children might have a different tolerance is a good start to encouraging our youth to recognize and be verbal about their own boundaries.
- ♦ **Don’t forget the digital** - We should be discussing what to share on social media; whether it’s sexualized content or just something potentially embarrassing, it’s part of boundaries and consent. Password sharing, online harassment, and texting/sexting are all important topics to discuss with our children.

Although consent basically comes down to respecting the rights of others, there are many nuances and ways to approach it. Let’s not be afraid to have these conversations!

Survivor Story

Alex

Alex is a sexual assault survivor who is a perfect example of the need to educate our young people about consent. A student at Stockton University in Galloway, N.J., majoring in Social Work, Alex vividly recalls the night she was raped by someone she knew.



One evening in August 2017, Alex was at a party with her friends when she started talking to a young man that she had previously met a couple of times. She thought he was a pretty cool guy, and so when he asked her to take a walk with him, she did. They walked to a neighboring house where they ended up in an outdoor shower; at this point Alex had given the boy full consent. However, as things escalated quickly, Alex became scared and told him that she needed to leave. He told her to just wait awhile, held her down, and raped her. She was so terrified that she just froze, unable to move.

Afterward, she ran back to her friends and told them what had happened. They, in turn, told her parents; although at first she resisted going to the hospital, her mother eventually took her, where she had a rape kit done. In addition to the trauma of the rape, she recalls the experience of the exam as being one of the most traumatizing experiences she had ever been through.

Alex realizes that some people will not understand the impact that the assault had on her, because she had initially given consent, and then withdrew it. But we know that everyone has the right to change their mind at any point when it comes to consent.

Alex's friends and family have been very supportive of her throughout her recovery and have encouraged her to speak up about her experience. There have been some people who don't believe her because the boy is such a nice guy, but she realizes that it doesn't matter what others think because it is *her* story.

As Alex works through her healing process she says that she hopes "to love myself so much that I let go of all my past judgements I have had on myself...I am on my way to my goal and I will make it there."

Around the Shelter

Our July bulletin board



July 4th brings a theme of freedom to mind, so it seemed fitting that our bulletin board would focus on one way that our clients may lose their freedom—human trafficking.



Human trafficking is the illegal trade of humans by means of force, fraud, or coercion for forced labor, debt, or sexual exploitation.

Human Trafficking generates more than \$150,000,000,000 (\$150 Billion) every year. It is the fastest growing and the 2nd largest criminal industry, next to drug dealing.

Traffickers use a variety of grooming tactics to manipulate and control their victims. Less than 10% of victims are kidnapped or forcibly abducted.

THEY: Control contact and movement. Condition victims to believe coercion is normal. Lie about economic opportunity.

Demand payment for real or fake debt. Threaten with violence. withhold documents and pay. Force to live in unfit conditions.

You have the right to: Be paid. A safe and healthy environment. Leave an abusive situation. Your documents. Be FREE.

Legislative Recap

VOCA Fix

We've heard a lot about the "VOCA Fix" lately, and we know it is important for DV/SV agencies and their funding, but what's it all about? The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund was established by Congress in 1984 to provide federal support to programs that assist victims of crime. The funds come from fines paid by federal criminals.

In the past few years the Department of Justice has entered into more deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements rather than convicting offenders. The money from these agreements goes into the Treasury rather than to VOCA grants, resulting in a 66% cut in funding to grants for victim services. The VOCA Fix Act redirects monetary penalties into the VOCA Fund, to help restore funding to agencies such as ours.

Here is the good news - On July 20th, the Senate voted to pass the VOCA Fix! Not only that, but the vote was unanimous, which is a good sign of support for agencies whose purpose is to provide support for victims of crime. Thanks to all of our legislators!

Upcoming Events

Looking Forward Support Group

One of our underserved and most difficult to reach populations is the elder community. We have been offering a support group for senior survivors, but have not had enough response to form a group. So we are looking for folks to spread the word about this opportunity! If you know anybody who might be interested in this group, or have a place in mind to post our flyer or share the information, please help us reach out!

Topics to be covered are types of abuse, safety planning, budgeting, coping skills, and more. It will be a safe place to learn, share, and find support.

If you know someone who might benefit from this group, please encourage them to get in touch with Sarah at 540-459-5599 or sarahh@responseva.org. Thanks!



Celebration of Hope 5K



Tickets are on sale for our "Celebration of Hope 5K Run/Walk!" We are so excited for this new-to-us fundraising event and you can help us make it a success. Please share our Facebook event, ask us for flyers for your church or local business, and spread the word to your runner friends!

Place: Shenandoah Co. Park, Maurertown.

Time: Registration 8:15-8:45am, race starts 9am.

Tickets: Early Bird through Sept.3 - \$35/adult, \$25/youth 12 and under. Regular registration - \$45/adult. Day-of registration - \$50. Groups of 10 - \$350 and receive 2 additional tickets free. Early bird registrants will receive a t-shirt.

Sponsorships are available and will have name/logo placed on the t-shirt.

Participants may purchase tickets at <https://www.responseva.org/upcoming-events> or call the office - 540-459-5599.