



Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Proclamation for *Start by Believing* Campaign

KANSAS CITY, Mo.— The Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), in partnership with Saint Luke's Hospital, is pleased to announce there will be a *Start by Believing* proclamation signing at the Metro Chiefs and Sheriffs Association meeting at Argosy Casino (Athens-A room) on April 3, 2019 at 11:00 a.m. Police Chiefs and Sheriffs will sign the proclamation along with representatives from four local prosecutor's offices including Mark Dupree, District Attorney of Wyandotte County; Eric Zahnd, Platte County Prosecutor; Jean Peters Baker, Jackson County Prosecutor; and Steve Howe, Johnson County District Attorney.

This press conference will celebrate and honor a bi-state commitment to survivors and ending sexual violence. Both Kansas and Missouri Governors have recently signed proclamations declaring the month of April as *Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)*. Missouri also declared the first Wednesday in April as *Start by Believing Day*.

In 2018, 700 victims of sexual assault received support at area hospitals, including Saint Luke's, when they sought a medical exam following an assault – an increase of 5% from 2017 as reported by MOCSA. MOCSA also experienced a 30% increase in crisis line calls last year. It is a critical time in our community for local citizens to support sexual violence awareness and take part in *Start by Believing* and SAAM efforts.

The campaign is called *Start by Believing*, because a friend or family member is typically the first person a victim confides in after an assault, and a positive reaction to that disclosure is the first step toward healing. Knowing how to respond is critical—a negative response can worsen the trauma and foster an environment where sexual assault predators face zero consequences for their crimes. *Start by Believing* is a public awareness campaign started by End Violence Against Women International (<https://www.evawintl.org/>) that focuses on improving the public response to sexual assault.

Throughout the month, participating agencies and individuals can show their support by placing *Start by Believing* posters and brochures in their offices, hosting or attending a SAAM event, and sharing on social media (#StartbyBelieving and #SAAM). MOCSA has plans to share personal gratitude with hundreds of local agencies, partners, and individuals during the month of April. For more information about MOCSA's involvement, please visit <https://mocsa.org/news-events/sexual-assault-awareness-month>.

About MOCSA and St. Luke's Hospital:

MOCSA is dedicated to improving the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and preventing sexual abuse in the community. For more information on MOCSA, visit <https://mocsa.org/>. Saint Luke's has been actively addressing sexual violence in the Kansas City metro since 1974. To learn more about Saint Luke's Hospital, visit <https://www.saintlukeskc.org/>.

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