



# NO NEWS

## A Letter from the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new agency year, it is time to reflect on SASSMM's journey over the past year.

We mentioned in our last newsletter that on April 1, 2011, our services expanded to Knox and Waldo counties. Each professional we have worked with has been welcoming and responsive to the realities of sexual violence and to the necessity for support services for all survivors regardless of age or gender.

Due to the good work of the Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center in Winthrop, who formerly covered that region, our transition has been easier than one could imagine. That said, the travel certainly has been challenging for all involved with SASSMM, yet, everyone on our staff and volunteers have been enthusiastic, and committed, to providing the best service possible in those counties.

I just completed a review of our services for our year that ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Some facts you may find interesting:

>1,489 contacts were made to our support line services, an increase of 21.6% over the same 12 months last year

> In the second half of this year (April 1 – September 30) there was a 60% increase in support line services

> 238 survivors received services which is a 15% increase from last year

> 141 sexual assaults occurred this year comparative to 110 last year – an increase of 28.2% and

> A total of 357 sexual assaults were reported to us from those 238 survivors

Our school based programs reached 6,781 students, faculty and staff in area elementary, middle, and high schools. SASSMM's Outreach Educational Programs experienced a 14% increase this year as we provided information and education to 3,057 community members.

It appears the work of many, rather it be directly for survivors or in awareness/prevention programs, are making a difference. When survivors contact us for advocacy, support and resource information, we are given the privilege to be one element of their strength, courage and journey towards regaining their personal power and claiming their sense of self.

No victim of a sex crime deserves, or causes, sexual violence. The responsibility, and accountability, for the crime lies directly with the abuser. There are very few other crimes, if any, that the characteristics of the survivor are called into question versus the behavior of the abuser. Sexual violence is not an accident, not a misunderstanding nor an outcome of sexuality that got out of control. It happens because abusers count on us to remain silent.

I am frequently asked if I think there is an increase in sexual violence or is there more awareness of services and the right we each have to live safely within our communities. The answer, I don't know. I believe that more survivors, and concerned others, are reaching out for support. They are asking to be heard and recognizing they don't need to walk their journey of the aftermath of sexual violence in solitude, isolation and/or in fear of blame and judgment. There does seem to be a correlation between substance abuse, economic challenges and violence. However, let me be clear there are NO excuses for acts of violence.

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**Mission Statement**

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine is an agency of professionals and trained volunteers dedicated to providing advocacy and support for survivors, families and concerned others affected by sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. SASSMM offers services to improve awareness and response by providing prevention, education and risk reduction programs throughout Eastern Cumberland, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Knox, and Waldo Counties.

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine  
 P.O. Box 990  
 Brunswick, ME 04011-0990  
 Phone, Brunswick Office: (207)725-2181  
 In Rockland: (207)594-8580  
 In Belfast: (207)338-4622

Fax (207)798-6943

24 Hour Support Line 1-800-822-5999

TTY 1-888-458-5599

Website: [www.sassmm.org](http://www.sassmm.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/sassmm](http://www.facebook.com/sassmm)

**A Letter from the Executive Director's Desk (Continued)**

The emotional, physical and financial toll that sexual assault takes on victims can be devastating. Adult sexual assault has the highest annual victim costs (of a single assault, \$87,000, US Department of Justice 1996) compared to all other crimes except child sexual assault (American College of Emergency Physicians). The financial impact of sexual assault includes the costs of law enforcement, health care, in addition to the loss of jobs, wages, and productivity. The impact to the human spirit has no assigned dollar amount. Victims' services and prevention programs are essential to responding to sexual assault.

You will find in our 'Your Voices' column the journey of one resilient and strong survivor. Her voice speaks volumes, better than anything I could ever say, as to why we exist and why we must stay focused on SASSMM's mission. Sexual violence impacts us all.

With respect,

Susan Hall Dreher  
 Executive Director

## NEW WEBSITE Coming Soon!

Sassmm is excited to announce that a new website is currently being created!

Stay tuned to check out  
[www.sassmm.org](http://www.sassmm.org)

Same web address, whole new look!





## What's In A Name?

Recently, SASSMM began asking this very question about one of our core services.

In 1983, when SASSMM (then the Bath Brunswick Rape Crisis Center) "opened its doors", the 24-hour hotline was the agency. The three women who so courageously founded the first sexual assault support agency in the Midcoast Maine area brought to the region a service that existed in other parts of the State and in many other locations around the country, a 24-hour hotline service to provide support and response to those affected by multiple forms of sexual violence.

Today, as we look at the variety of services we now have to offer to survivors, concerned others and to professionals in our communities, we realize that the term hotline does not truly represent the intent of SASSMM's 24-hour service. The reality is that the term "hotline" denotes an immediate urgency. Individuals may believe that someone has to have just been assaulted, be in danger, or have an acute emergency in order to access the 24-hour service. Although one of the major functions of the 24-hour line is to provide advocacy services in those emergency cases, it is not the only function the 24-hour line provides. This is why SASSMM made the decision to change our terminology from "24-hour hotline" to "24-hour support line." We feel this term is a more accurate representation of the service and hopefully will encourage individuals to call whenever they would like support, a non-judgmental listener or when they have questions or concerns, as well as, when they may be in an emergency situation.

In addition, SASSMM advocates are taking a more active approach in how we explain the 24-hour support line to individuals.

We acknowledge that some individuals may find accessing a phone line with an unknown person on the other end intimidating or challenging in some way. Therefore, SASSMM advocates are talking with people in a more strategic manner about the 24-hour support line and how it can be a part of their healing process. By fully explaining the intent of the service, by providing in person assistance (if possible) the

first time someone calls, by doing a test call with someone, and outlining step-by-step what people can expect when they call, SASSMM advocates hope to help alleviate some of the intimidation and discomfort associated with calling.

SASSMM's 24-hour support line will not meet the needs of every survivor or concerned other in our communities. However, with a slight name change and with a different approach to how we explain the service, it is our hope that survivors will be more informed to make the best choice for themselves and that the 24-hour support line will be just one element of the network of support that is utilized by those in our communities affected by sexual violence.

SASSMM's 24-hour Support Line can be reached by dialing [1-800-822-5999](tel:1-800-822-5999), from a cell phone dial 207-725-1500

The Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Line number is [1-800-871-7741](tel:1-800-871-7741)  
TTY: [1-888-458-5599](tel:1-888-458-5599)

Kayce Hunton  
Client Services Manager



## Save the Date

**Mark your calendar  
for these SASSMM events in  
2012:**

**Ninth Annual  
Celebrity Gala  
and Silent Auction:  
Saturday March 24, 2012**

**Eleventh Annual Ladies' Open  
Golf Tournament:  
Thursday June 7, 2012**

## Sexual Assault Response Team Update

Our SART update this quarter is focused on supporting survivors who report to law enforcement. In 2009, there were 374 forcible rapes reported in Maine. That is one rape every 23 hours and 25 minutes. However, in the Midcoast region alone in 2009, SASSMM supported 304 survivors; just 70 shy of the total reported for the entire state that year. We know that sexual assault is much more prevalent than the reporting rates show. In fact, most people today know that sexual assault is one of *the most* under reported crimes.

Studies have shown that nationally only 40% of sexual assaults were reported in 2005; by 2009 it had climbed to a 55% reporting rate. Of the 304 survivors SASSMM supported in 2009, 88 filed reports with law enforcement, a 29% reporting rate. Last year the reporting rate in SASSMM's service area was steady at 29%, with 92 of 315 survivors making reports. Undoubtedly, Midcoast Maine is not immune to the chronically low reporting rates of sexual assault, but we have made great strides to change that; ten years ago reporting rates in this area were only at 10%. The devoted and enthusiastic law enforcement agencies in this region have worked hard to make reporting easier for survivors; and our statistics are proof that the efforts of the SART are paying off!

Even still, when reading these statistics some may think 'what's wrong here?' or 'survivors should be encouraged to report so more perpetrators will be punished!' But it's not that simple. Survivors of sexual violence have to make the profoundly personal and deeply respected choice of whether or not to report to law

enforcement (unless they are a minor or an adult in guardianship, in which case deciding to report is out of their hands).

The statistics may be daunting, but the prospective of retelling ones story, an investigation and a trial can be daunting as well. Who would fault someone if they weren't ready to talk about a difficult and terrifying experience? It is for this reason that the courage of survivors who *do* report must be acknowledged. Dedicated law enforcement, caring nurses, skilled prosecutors and compassionate advocates on the SART in Midcoast Maine are always working to improve the system's response to survivors, and are ready to assist survivors who are going through the legal process.

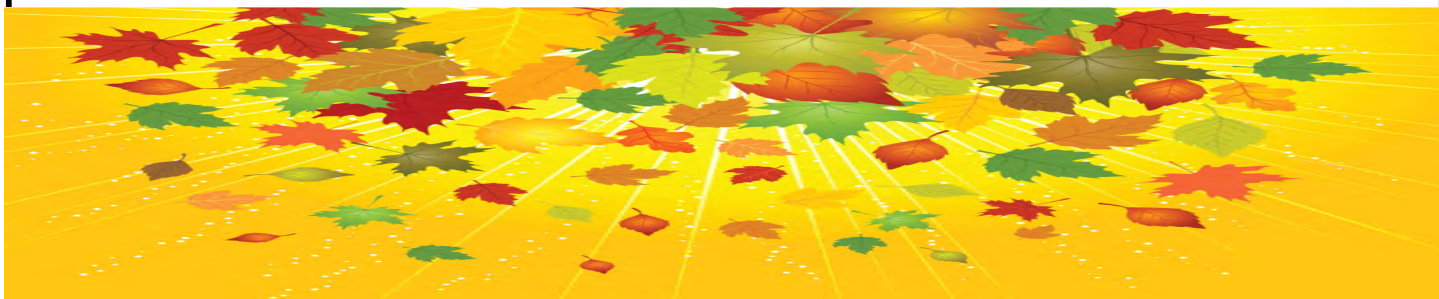
Ultimately, every survivor of sexual violence deserves support; and while reporting to law enforcement may not be the best decision for every survivor, those who do decide to report do not have to go through the process alone. If you would like more information about the Midcoast SART, or for survivor support for any type of sexual violence throughout the criminal or civil legal process, please contact Heidi at 725-2181 or email [sart@sassmm.org](mailto:sart@sassmm.org).

Heidi Hanley  
SART Advocate

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U.S. Department of Justice. *2005 National Crime Victimization Study*. 2005. Retrieved from <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/reporting-rates> on 9/12/11.

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## Facebook Privacy: It's Changed Again!

Over 800 million people log in to Facebook every month. In fact, if Facebook were its own country, it would be the third largest country in the world. With that many people on the site, sharing photos, links to other websites, playing games and interacting online has never been easier or more centralized. Facebook has found a way to encourage everyone to share their personal information (full name, birth date, cell phone number, even address, interests) and has made it even easier for online advertisers to target and reach customers both locally and globally.

With all of this data easily available, what can you do to protect yourself? Set your privacy settings! Many people allow "Everyone" on Facebook (800 million people!) to see parts of their profile. Facebook has recently rolled out new privacy settings (again) so it's a great time to login and see what is going on with your privacy and to restrict what you share.

To check your privacy settings, click on the 6 on the upper right hand corner of the screen when you are logged in to Facebook and then select "Privacy Settings." Here, you can control your Default settings, which should at the least be set to "Friends." You can restrict this further by clicking on "Custom" which will allow you to narrow down the list of who among your friends can see everything you post. If you've made friend lists, which is a feature that can allow you to share posts with or hide posts from selected friends, you can set the default so that anything you share is visible to your friends, but not your "Work" list friends. This way, if you'd like a post to be seen by those work friends, you can customize the setting before you post a specific item, but most of your posts will not be visible to those on the list.

There are several other options that you can restrict, including who can connect with you on Facebook (who can search for you, write on your wall, request to be your friend, etc) and how tags work (tags is a feature that allows friends to include you in their posts that will be linked from their profile to yours and includes friends who use Facebook Places to tag their location).

It's a timely reminder to check what you are sharing on Facebook and make sure that you aren't sharing more than you thought you were with 800 million people. Facebook's Help Center has more information about the changes and how you can select privacy settings that work for you, but Facebook has left the control in your hands. While you're checking your privacy settings, feel free to wander over to [www.facebook.com/sassmm](http://www.facebook.com/sassmm) and like Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine!

Andrea Nicoletta  
Community Educator

### Please Note!

As of April 1st, 2011,  
SASSMM's service area has  
expanded. We now serve  
Eastern Cumberland, Lincoln,  
Sagadahoc, Knox, and Waldo  
Counties.

Since the addition of Knox and Waldo  
Counties, SASSMM now has three  
available office phone numbers.

Brunswick: 207-725-2181

Rockland: 207-594-8580

Belfast: 207-338-4622



## A 'Your Voices' Column written by a survivor

### Worth It: A Meditation of Hope and Healing

*"The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,  
the more happiness you can contain." -Kahlil  
Gibran, from "The Prophet"*

So many times I have asked myself, is healing possible after tragedy? What does it feel like? Do you ever stop hurting? Do you get your life back?

When I was in high school, I was repeatedly raped by a father-figure friend of the family whom I loved and trusted. If you remember how vulnerable and scared age fifteen is, if you recall how fragile are a girl's dreams, innocence, and trust, you will understand my agony when these precious things were stolen from me.

Too ashamed to tell my secret and without words to express the horror even if I could have spoken out, I lived through four years of high school in an iron cage of silence, trying to survive. I withdrew into a dream world where I felt safe and protected. Even there, I could not escape the pain that was eating me up inside.

Just before graduation, I knew I had to tell my parents about the abuse. Instinctively I knew that before I could live, I first had to heal. Healing began with stammering, halting words, as my parents' love melted the icebergs of silence that had separated us for far too long.

After graduation, the carefully constructed house of cards that I called my life collapsed. The first tentative words I had spoken were like a dike giving way. I could no longer hold the pain inside. I had to cry.

I had to get angry.

There were times when the pain was so great that I couldn't draw a deep breath. Times of overwhelming grief for lost childhood, lost girlhood, lost belief in the world, lost relationships, lost chances. Times of quiet heartache.

Every day I dreamed of what I would do with my life once I got it back. Every night I lit candles to symbolize brighter days ahead. Healing became the laurel crown I coveted as the victorious end of a race I thought I could never finish.

Like a receding storm tide, the agony gradually began to ebb. A pasture full of lightening bugs on a sultry summer night, the first snowfall of winter, apple blossoms against a spring-time sky, and fallen leaves in autumn all gave me the same old thrill of delight.

I can truly say that healing is a miracle. Although it isn't the exuberantly perfect state I told myself it would be on those dark winter nights when I wanted to give up on life, I now have hard-won strength, courage, and hope in my arsenal to face the struggles, heartaches, and doubts. I have faced my memories, smelled their breath, and they can no longer control me. I have been deep into the darkness of pain and now, emerging into the light of joy, I find the colors of life so much brighter.

For me, healing means drawing deep breaths of thankfulness and feeling alive for the first time in years. It means waking up to a new day with a whole spirit, looking forward to watching a great movie, taking a long hike, or going square-dancing. It means a long day of satisfying hard work and not remembering once that I am an abuse survivor. It means going to college and realizing that out-lived pain has not dulled my love of learning.



## SASSMM Receives STOP VAWA Grant

SASSMM is pleased to announce that we are the recipient of a STOP VAWA (Violence Against Women) grant that has a start date of Dec. 20, 2011. Our grant award continues the funding for our Community Advocate position. The SASSMM Community Advocate primarily works with older adults and/or people with disabilities in the Midcoast. The grant will allow the services provided by our Community Advocate to provide our older adult services into the expanded SASSMM service area of Knox and Waldo Counties.

One program that our Community Advocate is currently facilitating is a Tea & Tips program. Tea & Tips is an eight week series of conversations between individuals with disabilities and/or older adults, social service providers, law enforcement and other community members who share tips, strategies, agency run programs, local and state resources. Tea & Tips is designed to increase quality of life, personal safety, community safety and prolong independence for older community members and adults with disabilities. Each meeting features providers speaking about programs and offers 'expert' information for the community members. Many of these topics are not new to those attending.

Community members share what they have learned over a lifetime of living and are exposed to new information to support continued community involvement and personal independence. In total more than 40 service providers present their services, programs and information over the course of the series. These conversations have developed

a strong working relationship between law enforcement, service providers, care providers while opening the minds of providers to the strength and resilience of older adults. The goal of the series is to support the dignity of those attending and enhance the responsiveness of services to educate, empower, protect and assist older adults and individuals with disabilities while creating a culture of ability over decline.

Jenn Hemingway  
Community Advocate

it's  
time  
for all  
of us



to  
prevent  
sexual  
violence

### if you have... 30 seconds

- begin by believing
- respond thoughtfully to a sexist comment directed at you or someone else
- refuse to support companies that glamorize violence
- post a sexual violence statistic on your Facebook, Twitter feed, blog, or website
- hang an informational poster about sexual violence in your workplace or school
- pledge to never condone acts of violence

### 5 minutes

- make a donation to your local sexual assault support center
- contact your legislators and ask them to support violence prevention funding
- if you think someone is too intoxicated to consent, check in with them or the other person
- call for help if you witness an act of violence
- invite a sexual violence prevention educator to talk with your business, community organization, or school
- listen and support
- begin by believing

for more info, visit  
[www.mecasa.org](http://www.mecasa.org)  
or call 207 626 0034

## Tenth Annual Ladies' Open Golf Tournament

On Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, 80 lady golfers navigated the wind on the golf course and also raised approximately \$9,000 for Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine.

The golfers thoroughly enjoyed the tournament. They certainly appreciated the community support of the businesses that sponsored and donated to the tournament. In addition to eight corporate sponsors, we had thirty-one hole-sponsors and many businesses and individuals that donated prizes or in-kind services. We are deeply grateful for your continuing generosity

The revenue SASSMM earns from the golf tournament is crucial to SASSMM's work of providing free and confidential services to those impacted by sexual violence and delivering educational programming to students throughout the Midcoast area. Thank you.



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Dodie Jones  
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Lynn Ouellette  
Paula Cornelio

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Heidi Hanley  
Bethany Hunter  
Andrea Nicoletta  
Jenn Hemingway  
Kayce Hunton  
Hannah Stevens  
Alison Grey



Thanks to Patrick Badcock, Jimbo Gallant, Allan Greenleaf and the rest of the staff of the Brunswick Golf Club for all of their assistance.

# SASSMM Support Groups

&

## Additional Advocacy Services For Survivors, Parents and Concerned Others

### Support Groups: A Piece of the Healing Process.

Survivors of sexual violence are often left with deep feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment. Many feel they have no one to turn to for support and assistance.

SASSMM provides a casual and non-judgmental environment for individuals to connect with others who have been through similar life events. Participants share personal experiences, discuss information and exchange resources.

Groups focus on healing and moving forward. A variety of survivor-centered groups are offered.

Call 1-207-725-2181 to schedule a pre-group appointment.

### SASSMM also offers the following services:

- **One-To-One Support**

- For individuals waiting for a group to begin, or simply looking for information and support, SASSMM offers meetings on a scheduled basis.

- **24-Hour Crisis and Support Line**

- 1-800-822-5999, from a cell phone call 1-207-725-1500
- TTY dial 1-888-458-5599

- **Specific advocacy and assistance around law enforcement and legal proceedings.**

- **Informed advocacy services for people with disabilities and older individuals.**

All of SASSMM's advocacy services are confidential\* and free of charge. Services are available to survivors of sexual violence and the people who care about survivors, no matter when the assault or abuse occurred. We look forward to speaking with you.

\*SASSMM advocates are mandated reporters and in some cases information shared may not be able to remain confidential.



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Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine

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