

UNITED WAY OF THE OHIO VALLEY

WEBSTER COUNTY

PARTNER AGENCY: NEW BEGINNINGS SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICES, INC.

My agency is in the second year implementing a primary prevention program in Webster County High School. As the prevention educator at New Beginnings, I feel primary prevention is essential to reducing the violence that effects most students throughout their school career and even past into adulthood. This program focuses on bystander prevention and trains the students to spot the warning signs of bullying, dating violence, stalking, and sexual violence within the students peer groups and school setting. A section of the training is devoted to what these types of violence may look like in a given situation in which the students may encounter. The students learn how to recognize the signs that would tell them that power personal violence may happen. I discuss with them the steps a perpetrator may use to target a victim. I also share with them my own past story when I was in a similar situation and instead of becoming a victim; a bystander stepped in and saved me from being sexually assaulted. After sharing my personal story with them I give them time to reflect and think about what is their personal connection to ending violence. It could be; they just want to keep their friends and family safe, they know someone who has had powerbase personal violence happen to them, or they have had something happen to them personally. After they have time to reflect quietly they then write their connections anonymously and turn it in to me. They are told to only write what they would want to be read out loud. As the training continues I stop every so often and read aloud one or two of the connection slips the students turn in. From doing this activity in the past I know already I am going to get some really personal connection because it happens every time and usually the majority of them have to do with sexual assault. I always take some time when they are busy with an activity to read through the connection slips to make sure everything is appropriate. As I was quickly reading through them on this occasion I came to a very long connection. It was a summary of one of the student's whole childhood. It started out in all caps: I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO? It went on to explain how the student had grown up with foster siblings and had been sexually assaulted over and over by the children that were brought into her home. She said at first she was scared but wasn't sure if what they were doing was wrong but as she got older she knew it was but was afraid to tell because she had waited so long to say anything about what had been happening to her in her home. Later in the training this student came up to me at a break and told me what she has wrote and wanted to know what she could do to get help. Together we worked on the solution and she got the help she needed. She was able to make her own new beginning through seeing our therapist on a regular basis and her family also came to session with her and was able to provide her with a safe home. I know without a doubt that because New Beginnings is a part of the community and educating students young and old, it is possible for victims to get the help they need and prevent future violence and emotional trauma in our communities.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL YOUR INVESTMENT MAKE?

With your investment of \$100 **New Beginnings** can:

- Help provide sound boards to be placed on walls within the offices to help absorb the noise and not disturb the clients while they are in therapy sessions

Note: Noise in the office can be an issue with someone when they are in therapy trying to process their abuse. This is especially true if they are doing the meditation therapy with the therapist. Sound boards assist with noise so the session is not disturbed.

