

HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital Hosts Events Throughout Month To Educate and Support Victims

by Kelly Barbeau
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O'FALLON, Ill. — April is recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness Month ([SAAM](#)), and HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital is sharing important information about this critical issue through multiple public events.

Sexual assault is any sexual contact that is forced or is against a person's wishes. It is a crime of violence that has a profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity and well-being.

This type of assault can happen to anyone, of any age or gender. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), over half of women and almost 1 in 3 men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes. Sexual assault also often happens in a trusting relationship. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network ([RAINN](#)), 8 out of 10 assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.

Seeking Medical Attention

For survivors of sexual assault who seek medical attention, St. Elizabeth's Hospital currently has 21 nurses who are either trained or in training as sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE) to provide care and assistance.

Amy Taylor Signore, DNP, MSN, BS, RN, SANE-A/PA SANE, conducts examinations at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. While this type of nursing can be extremely difficult physically and emotionally, she knows this role is so important to have available in the area.

“The sexual assault survivor faces lifelong consequences that can be detrimental to their physical, emotional and fiscal well-being,” she explained. “At St. Elizabeth's, we have a team of highly trained and compassionate SANEs that respond 24/7 to the needs of sexual assault survivors. We provide sexual assault survivors with the initial care and resources that will aide in their healing process and prevent some of those long-term consequences that come from a sexual assault.

Educational Events at St. Elizabeth's

Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an opportunity to talk about how everyone has a part in bringing attention to this important issue. Signore and the other SANEs at St. Elizabeth's are conducting a number of educational events throughout the month of April to educate and raise community awareness. Activities include:

- **Take Back the Night Walk April 17 at 7 p.m.** Meet in the hospital main lobby to join St. Elizabeth's SANE nurses for a candlelight walk around the lake on the hospital campus to show your support of sexual assault survivors.

- **Talk to a SANE Nurse Tuesdays in April.** Have you ever had questions about sexual assault? Are you interested in resources? Are you curious about the role of SANE nursing or want to become a SANE? SANE team members will be available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the hospital's main lobby to provide resources and answer any questions. Donations will be accepted to support the SANE program for patients at St. Elizabeth's. Items needed include adult-sized new sweatshirts, sweatpants, socks and underwear; for pediatrics, new stuffed animals.
- **Sexual Assault Awareness and Self-Defense Class April 29.** HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital and the O'Fallon Police Department are partnering to offer two sessions of a Sexual Assault Awareness and Self-Defense Class on Monday, April 29. Choose between two session times – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., both at Enjoy Church, 251 Regency Park, O'Fallon. The class is free and open to the public. Registration is required. Register by calling 618-234-2120, ext. 11573 or by emailing amy.signore@hshs.org.

Along with these events, Signore and the other SANEs are leading other activities during the month for their St. Elizabeth's colleagues to join in showing support for victims.

“It should never be the sole responsibility of the survivor to bring awareness to the subject,” Signore said. “Every member of the community has a role to play in this fight against sexual assault and we invite members of our community to join us in learning more and offering support to those affected by sexual assault.”

For more information about HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital, visit steliz.org.