

# C.A.R.E. Chronicle

SPRING 2015

## C.A.R.E. Observes Sexual Assault Awareness Month

What would your reaction be? A deputy appears at your front door and notifies you that your teenage daughter was raped. Would your reaction be: "That's what she gets! She was out past curfew and she got what she deserved." That is exactly what happened in the early 1980's right here in Charlotte County. Thankfully, a more enlightened deputy by the name of Bill Rielly was appalled at the reaction of the family. As a result he approached some local female community leaders about establishing a rape crisis center, and together the foundation was set for establishing C.A.R.E., an organization that not only provides help to victims of sexual assault but also informs and educates the community about the issues surrounding the crime of sexual violence.

The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc. has launched the **Begin by Believing** community awareness program during the month of April. Often, victims of rape are fearful of not being believed, or are afraid of being blamed. People judge others thinking the victim was too impaired, too under-dressed, in the wrong place or out too late. **Begin by Believing** starts by not blaming the victim; instead treat the victims with compassion and respect.

If your friend told you, "My daughter died in a car crash", would your response be: "Well, that's what she gets for not taking the bus." This is not the normal reaction from people, and it is not intended to be a joke. Actually, the intent of the example is to get people's reactions to start a conversation about victim blaming, and to help us all understand how devastating it is not to be believed when one is the victim of a crime. A victim should not have defend her actions.

Rape victims often feel invalidated when family and friends find out their rapist was an ex-partner, friend or family member, and they do not believe her. Most people cannot imagine the fear that rape victims experience when they have been isolated and then sexually assaulted, especially if they were raped by someone they know and trusted. The fact is that 84% of rapes are carried out by someone the victim knows, trust or loves, according to the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy.

One of the positive actions Charlotte County is taking to improve the response to victims of sexual violence is the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Partners include C.A.R.E., the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Punta Gorda Police Department, Charlotte Correctional Institute, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care, State Attorney's Office, the local hospitals, Department of Health and the school district. These dedicated professionals coordinate county-wide responses to victims of sexual assault and rape so that no matter where a victim goes for help in our community, she/he is not only treated with compassion but also receives the same knowledgeable care and treatment.

Everyone makes mistakes and uses poor judgment sometimes. Should rape be the punishment? Rape is a crime and is a "violation to a person's right to autonomy". C.A.R.E. asks you to think before making inappropriate rape jokes, making light of a rape victim's situation, or trivializing the horror of rape. Lend a compassionate ear to a victim, believe them, encourage them to seek medical attention and to call C.A.R.E. Begin by Believing.

### Services Statistics

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Domestic Violence Hotline Calls	1823	1542	1508	1532
Sexual Assault Hotline Calls	167	208	183	198
Civil Legal Assistance Cases	39	134	170	204
Crisis Counseling Hours	2708	1380	1919	1801
Sexual Assault New Victims	220	175	209	226
Victim Services Counseling Hours	2708	3011	3267	4185
Justice System Advocacy Hours	4427	4264	5572	4900
School/Community Presentations	424	313	363	302
Total Attendees	14,925	11,689	11,583	9979
Total Volunteer Hours	17,846	15,749	12,136	8853

### Current Needs

- 1 Diapers**  
in sizes 2,3 & 4
- 2 Mr. Clean**  
housekeeping cleanser
- 3 Paper Towels**



*I believe in the goals and philosophy of C.A.R.E. I have referred friends and employees to the organization; all of them have been treated with respect and dignity. The follow through on issues is outstanding, providing much needed support services in the area. I believe in giving back to the community that has allowed me to call Charlotte County my home.*

*~ Jo Ann Tompkins*

## Do YOU Wonder What YOUR Support Means to Survivors?

*An excerpt from an email to one of our Case Managers*

"I am so excited you have been part of my journey! Thank you so much for everything you have done for me and the kids. You are truly a blessing to me! Words cannot express my gratitude. Thank you from the bottom of my heart; the kids say thank you too. Contacting C.A.R.E. and you especially has been a huge blessing and my heart has not felt this way in a very long time. Things are finally changing in every direction. Thank you!"



*Christmas Shop - "Christmas for C.A.R.E. Families provided by our generous donors"*



*Two dressers were donated by the Anonymous Group.*



*C.A.R.E. Staff sends big thanks to Publix #1287.*



*Recipient of a baby quilt made and donated by the Evening Star Quilt Guild.*



### C.A.R.E. Auxiliary "Aiming To C.A.R.E." Dart Tournament

**Top:** Auxiliary members Sharon, Kristie, Judi, Ann and Kathy checking in dart players

**Bottom:** John Berry, The Ice House Pub, and Judi Harris get the dart tournament started

**Right:** Dart Tournament Champions from left to right Linda Copley, Millie Rosenfield, Art Brewster and Lynn Martin



# Begin by *Believing*

What is the **Begin by *Believing*** campaign? It is a community awareness program designed to encourage and empower public and private sector service providers, and Charlotte County residents to **Begin by *Believing*** when a person says they have been victimized. Many victims are fearful of not being believed, or are fearful of being blamed. Across the nation, some professionals have hastily dismissed or purposely written off victims' accounts because they were judged to be too young, too old, to impaired, too under-dressed, in the wrong place, too difficult to understand, or somehow to blame. **Begin by *Believing*** starts by not blaming the victim.

When we are talking about sexual assault victims, the ideal way to find out the facts and determine what really happened is to first establish rapport with victims in order to gather essential information. Then investigate by interviewing suspects and witnesses, collecting evidence, resulting in a well-founded decision to either file charges, or to clear a suspect of the crime. This campaign does not mean saying the exact words, "I believe you." The important issue is to ensure that the victim is treated with compassion and respect, and to ensure the report is handled professionally. It is equally important that friends and family members support the victim and express concern with statements like "I am sorry this happened to you" or "How can I be of help?"

In a 2011 study, Dr. Debra Patterson demonstrated the way investigators interview victims can have an impact on the quality of information gained, and even an increased likelihood of prosecution. When an investigator genuinely pays attention to the way victims feel about the assault, and takes time to build rapport with the victim ensuring she feels safe, those cases are more likely to be prosecuted. This approach allows victims to feel they are doing the right thing and improves law enforcement's success in investigating the assault.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and C.A.R.E is promoting public awareness about sexual violence. Sexual violence is a public health, human rights and social justice issue. We need everyone's help to educate communities on how to prevent it and end it. Because rapists attack an average of six times, one failed response and prosecution can equal five more victims. If each of us improves our personal reactions to victims, we can create positive community support and responses. The goal is to change outcomes for victims, one response at a time.

## Recent

**Englewood Community  
Action Team**

**C.A.R.E. Auxiliary "Aiming to  
C.A.R.E." Dart Tournament**  
March 22 at The Ice House Pub

## Ongoing

**ReUse Stores**  
[www.carefl.org/reuse-stores](http://www.carefl.org/reuse-stores)

**Englewood**  
7070 Environmental Way  
**Port Charlotte**  
16975 Kenilworth Blvd.

## Upcoming

**National Crime Victims'  
Rights Week Lunch**  
April 22, 2015

**Charlotte County Pride Fest**  
May 9, 2015  
Lashley Park, Punta Gorda

**2015 Ladies Day  
Tarpon Tournament**  
May 9, 2015  
Boca Grande, Florida  
[www.ladiestarpon.com](http://www.ladiestarpon.com)

**C.A.R.E. Ball 2016**  
January 23, 2016  
"A Night In Old Havana"

*I pledge to*  
**Begin by**  
*Believing*

Name or Organization:

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Signature:

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Date:

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Comments:

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**The Center for Abuse  
and Rape Emergencies, Inc.**

PO Box 510234  
Punta Gorda, Florida 33950



Did you know making a bequest  
to C.A.R.E. is a gift that costs  
nothing during your lifetime?

**PREVENTION CORNER**

**YES, I would like to help survivors of violence in Charlotte County.  
You can count on my support to help families stay safe.**

- \$18 provides a 20-minute crisis hotline call for a victim of sexual assault
- \$23 sponsors a survivor safety/legal services screening with a paralegal
- \$50 provides a week's supply of paper goods, laundry and cleaning supplies for the shelter
- \$90 supports private counseling services for a child victim
- \$121 provides for replacement of critical documents for a family of 4 (birth certificates, ID card)
- \$325 provides a consultation with a domestic violence attorney for injunctive representation

Other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in honor of \_\_\_\_\_

For:  Mother's Day  Father's Day  Birthday  Anniversary  Other occasion \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**To make a credit card donation, please go to [www.carefl.org](http://www.carefl.org) OR**

Please bill my credit card.  VISA  MASTERCARD  DISCOVER  AMERICAN EXPRESS

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ CC# \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ CW# \_\_\_\_\_ The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc. PO Box 510234, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0234

