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News Release

For Immediate Release

Denim Day Seeks to Raise Sexual Assault Awareness

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department and the Springfield Police Department are recognizing Denim Day today, April 26, by hanging pairs of jeans from the health department's main building facing Chestnut Expressway in Government Plaza.

Denim Day seeks to raise awareness and educate about rape and sexual assault. Denim Day began in the 1990s in Italy. In 1992 an 18-year-old woman was sexually assaulted by her driving instructor. She pressed charges and eventually won the case. The instructor appealed, and in 1999 the Italian High Court overturned the conviction with a member of the court declaring that since the victim wore very tight jeans, the instructor could not have removed them himself. Therefore, the victim must have willingly participated.

Women of the Italian legislature protested the decision by wearing jeans. As the news of the decision spread, so did the protest.

Springfield Police Department data reports 106 instances of forcible rape in the city in 2011. These are just the incidents that are reported. Rape and sexual assault are among the most under-reported violent crimes.

As part of Denim Day awareness, health department employees and their co-workers at the City of Springfield have been collecting items of denim clothing for donation to the Victim Center and Harmony House in Springfield. The Victim Center serves victims of violent and sexual crime in Springfield and southwest Missouri. Harmony House provides shelter, advocacy and education to survivors of domestic violence.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205.