



## **WEAR DENIM TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

### **April 24<sup>TH</sup> is Denim Day and Survivors Need Your Support**

Every two minutes, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted and 60% of these assaults are never reported to the police, making it the most underreported violent crime in America (National Sexual Violence Resource Center). Pillars' Sexual Assault Program offers counseling, medical/legal advocacy, and a 24-hour crisis line for people affected by sexual assault.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in the United States and Pillars staff will join in a national movement against victim-blaming on the 24<sup>th</sup>: Denim Day.

Denim Day began 24 years ago in Italy, when an 18-year-old woman was picked up by her 45-year-old driving instructor for her first lesson, taken to an isolated road where he raped and threatened her with murder if she disclosed to anyone. Undeterred, the brave woman prosecuted her rapist and he was subsequently convicted and sent to jail. He went on to appeal the case, which made it all the way up to the Italian Supreme Court, where, in a matter of days, the case was overturned and dismissed. He was released.

In a statement by the Chief Judge, he argued that "because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them, and by removing the jeans it was no longer rape but consensual sex."

Enraged by the verdict, the women in the Italian Parliament launched into immediate action and protested by wearing jeans to work. Since then, the movement has spread all over the world in an effort to bring awareness to the many myths that still surround sexual violence.

"When someone first hears the story connected to Denim Day, there is almost always an immediate outrage at such a devastating injustice," says Patty Murphy, Director of Advocacy and Prevention for Pillars' Sexual Assault program. "Denim Day is an effort to help turn that outrage into action."

Please join Pillars in a visible sign of protest against victim-blaming on Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> by wearing jeans to work for the day. Awareness is a critical component to shifting harmful attitudes and enacting social change; this April, let's show survivors of sexual assault and abuse that we believe and support them!

