

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***Start by Believing* Campaign Launching in Kansas City**

KANSAS CITY, Mo.— the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), in partnership with Saint Luke's Hospital, numerous local law enforcement, criminal justice and community agencies are launching a unique public awareness campaign across the metro Kansas City area focusing on improving the public response to sexual assault. An unprecedented showing of support by area Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs will take place at the inauguration of *Start by Believing* that will be held at the Metropolitan Chiefs and Sheriffs Association meeting at Argosy Casino on April 6 at 12 p.m. During the ceremony, official *Start by Believing* proclamations will be made by local law enforcement officials as a declaration to make April 6th *Start by Believing Day* in the Kansas City metro, and to show their commitment to survivors of sexual violence. Additionally, numerous cities and counties across the metro are issuing proclamations throughout the month of April in support of the *Start by Believing* campaign.

As the first private sexual assault hospital in the country, Saint Luke's Hospital serves as a key advocate for sexual violence victims in the Kansas City metro. As part of their emergency services, the hospital employs specially trained forensic examiner nurses, who collaborate with law enforcement, prosecutors and advocacy programs to ensure proper forensic injuries documentation. Last year alone, in the Kansas City metro, 2,781 survivors of sexual violence and their friends and families received services through MOCSA. Over 700 victims of sexual assault received support at area hospitals, including Saint Luke's, when they sought a medical exam following an assault and others received individual and criminal justice advocacy, counseling and support. It is a critical time in our community for the continued support of sexual violence awareness and to take part of *Start by Believing* efforts.

The campaign is called *Start by Believing*, because a friend or family member is typically the first person a victim confides in after an assault, and a positive reaction to that disclosure is the first step toward recovery. Knowing how to respond is critical—a negative response can worsen the trauma and foster an environment where sexual assault predators face zero consequences for their crimes.

Research documents that rapists attack an average of six times, which means that one failed response can equal five more victims. *Start by Believing* will lead the way toward stopping this cycle, by creating a positive community response, informing the public, uniting allies and supporters, and improving our personal reactions. The goal is to change our community and outcomes for victims, one response at a time.

"Knowing how to react when someone discloses experiencing sexual violence can be the difference in the way they seek justice, and more importantly, how they heal," said Julie Donelon, MOCSA President & CEO. "The *Start by Believing* campaign is an opportunity to show our support as a community to survivors of sexual violence."

Throughout the month, law enforcement members will display a decal on their squad cars, and all participating agencies will place posters and brochures in their offices to show their support. For more information about MOCSA's involvement in the *Start by Believing* campaign, please visit [www.facebook.com/mocsakc](http://www.facebook.com/mocsakc).

MOCSA is dedicated to improving the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and preventing sexual abuse in the community. For more information on MOCSA, visit [www.mocsa.org](http://www.mocsa.org). Saint Luke's has been actively addressing sexual violence in the Kansas City metro since 1974. To learn more about Saint Luke's Hospital, please visit [www.saintlukeshealthsystem.org](http://www.saintlukeshealthsystem.org).

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