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blaming, frequently a component of sexual assault cases, the city of Marion, in conjunction with the Hands of Hope and the Marion Police Department, will be taking part in the “What Were You Wearing?” campaign, an initiative designed to increase awareness that regardless of what a person is doing or wearing, it is never an excuse for sexual assault.

“We have to change the narrative,” Wilk said. “We have got to make people understand that no matter what, if you don’t give consent, and you force someone to sexually be assaulted, that’s rape. We need that message out there, and we need our leaders to be speaking that message loud and clear.”

Displays featuring various outfits, including lounge wear, army uniforms, and dresses, have been placed throughout Grant and Wabash counties. The outfits chosen were based on 50 survivor’s descriptions of the clothes they were wearing during their sexual assault, and the displays are there to educate, not traumatize.

Along with City Hall, displays can be found at Sender Café, Marion General Hospital, Marion Public Library, Gas City Hall, Marion High School, Indiana Wesleyan University, Manchester University, Modoc’s in Wabash, Wabash High School, and Southwood High School.

“It is our hope as the city of Marion, as the Marion Police Department, and part of the Sexual Assault Response Task Force here in Grant County, we wanted to participate in the ‘What Were You Wearing?’ campaign,” Haley said. “We wanted to participate in that because we wanted to encourage victims of sexual assault and sexual violence to report those crimes to law enforcement.”

Additionally, Haley stated that if victims are afraid or unsure of reporting sexual assaults initially, that they still have the ability to go Marion General Hospital to be examined by one of MGH’s top tier professionals. Also, for those who wish to report their assault anonymously, the Marion Police

Department would retrieve their kit and hold it in evidence for up to a year until the victim feels comfortable going to law enforcement.

Wilk also highlighted a variety of resources throughout Grant County, including Hands of Hope, which are dedicated to helping victims of sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking, and substance abuse.

“The goal, again, is to get these into the hands of survivors, to let them know which resources are available,” Wilk said. “It takes each of us working together to help them heal. It’s so important that we know that resources are available and that our community cares. It doesn’t matter why someone has been victimized...we just want them to come forward and know that we care about them.”

Olyer, who now works as WBAT’s main news reporter after a stint at the Chronicle-Tribune, is a victim herself, having been assaulted while a student at Ball State in 2015. While her rapist was found responsible on two separate occasions, the pain of the ordeal deeply affected Olyer in many areas of her life.

But thankfully, with the help of people like Haley and Wilk, combined with the support of her family and friends, Olyer has rediscovered her joy and passion.

Olyer encouraged those in attendance, as well as the Marion community, to be vigilant and to help victims in any way possible.

“I just ask you to talk to victims, listen, believe, and ask them how you can help,” Olyer said. “This is something that we know happens, but we typically don’t know when it happens to someone we know. Throughout this process, I volunteer to be a face with that story.”

“It doesn’t matter what your circumstance is,” Haley said. “It doesn’t matter where you are in your life. It doesn’t matter if you have an addiction issue or if you’re a college student. It doesn’t matter what you were wearing. Nobody deserves to be sexually assaulted.”

Additionally, Resolution

No. 2-2021, a resolution authorizing the filing of an application for a grant under Sections 5311 and 5339 of the Federal Transit Act, was passed by the Council by a 6-0 margin.

Contract administrator for Marion Transportation Department Chuck Martindale stated the department, as they have every year since the late 1970’s, seeking the Council’s approval to apply for a grant for operating subsidies and capital funding to keep Marion’s transportation up and running. The City received a little over two million dollars in 2020 for an 18-month grant through July of last year through December 31 of this year. Furthermore, 100 percent of the operating expenses for the Marion transit system will be reimbursed through December of this year.

The allocation for 2022 is 770,000 in federal funds and close to 300,000 in state funds for a grand total of 1,068,585 for 2022, according to Martindale.

“That is the crux of the request for the resolution authorizing the city to apply for the grant for next year to subsidize the operations of the transit system and enable the transit system to continue running,” Martindale said.

The next Marion Common Council will be held on Tuesday, April 20 at 7 p.m.

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