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PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH, COMMUNITY LEADERS HOST SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH RESOURCE FAIR, FREE WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE CLASS



TWINSBURG, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich hosted a resource fair in Twinsburg in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, allowing community members to connect with local resources available for survivors of sexual violence. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with providers spanning medical care, trauma therapy, victim advocacy, and legal assistance. The evening

concluded with a free women's self-defense class taught by a certified personal defense instructor and former law enforcement officer. Participants learned and practiced numerous physical and verbal techniques to escape potential attackers, including wrist breakaways, knee strikes, kicks, and ways to get out of various chokeholds. The event was co-hosted by Stow Clerk of Courts Nicole Kowalski, with support from Twinsburg Mayor Sam Scaffide.

“One of the biggest reasons why survivors of sexual violence don’t come forward is the fear of not being believed or another negative reaction. By starting from a place of belief, we break the stigma that survivors of sexual violence face, and ensure a professional, thorough, and evidence-based investigation,” said Prosecutor Kolkovich. **“I’m proud to host this event to help survivors and their loved ones connect with available resources, and to break the stigma that survivors face.”**

This event is a part of Kolkovich’s 2026 Start by Believing campaign in Summit County. Started by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI), the Start by Believing campaign is a national effort to reduce the stigma surrounding sexual violence so that survivors are empowered to seek care and make reports. The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office has led the campaign locally in Summit County since 2019, hosting awareness and pledge events to “turn Summit County teal”—the color of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This week, April 19 to 25, 2026, is also National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is sponsored by the Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime to confront and remove barriers to achieving justice for all victims of crime.

“As a woman, the statistic that 1 in 4 women are survivors of sexual assault is deeply personal; it represents friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbors. It may for many of you, as well. This reality is why I am committed to helping create a culture where survivors feel safe to speak and are met first with belief. By choosing to listen without judgment, we can begin to change the narrative and support healing,” said Stow Clerk of Courts Nicole Kowalski.

“As mayor I am proud the city of Twinsburg was chosen to hold this event. Awareness is the first step towards prevention of sexual assault. Each year, we light our city hall in teal on Start by Believing Day to support the *Turn Summit County Teal* campaign,” said Twinsburg Mayor Sam Scaffide.

Prosecutor Kolkovich emphasizes that how the public responds to disclosures of sexual violence matters. Well-intentioned questions, about where someone was, what they were wearing, or what they did, can inadvertently shift focus onto the survivor rather than the offender, reinforcing a culture that discourages reporting. Creating space for survivors to be heard without judgment is the first step toward justice.

If you or someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence, there are resources available. In Summit County, the 24-hour Hope and Healing Survivor Resource Hotline is (330) 374-1111. The Summit County Victim Assistance Program’s 24-hour hotline is (330) 376-0040. Survivors outside of Summit County can contact RAINN’s National Sexual Assault Hotline by calling (800) 656-HOPE (4673), or by texting “HOPE” to 64673.

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