

SIUE to Host Conversation About Sexual Assault and Bystander Intervention

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - SIUE's Lovejoy Library will host a movie screening and conversation about Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

From 4–6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, students and community members are invited to a screening of “The Bystander Moment,” a film about how to intervene before sexual assault happens. Attendees can enjoy coloring books and snacks while engaging in conversations with an SIUE counselor and a representative from [Metro East Every Survivor Counts](#).

“The film is just about how to stop sexual assault before it starts, because we know there are a lot of people who stand around and allow stuff to happen, especially on college campuses. People do not intervene,” explained Simone Williams, one of the organizers of the event. “We just want to get this information out and to let people in the community know, hey, if this has happened to you, here are some resources that you can go to.”

Williams is the Diversity and Engagement Librarian and an assistant professor at SIUE. She said the university hosted a bystander training a few weeks ago, and not many students signed up. She knows that it can be uncomfortable to talk about sexual misconduct and assault, and she hopes this event encourages more open dialogue about sexual assault and how to prevent it.

“You are on a college campus, and we do have a number of sexual assaults that happen every semester,” she said. “Students are uncomfortable with talking about sexual assault, even though they will come and tell one of us that they’ve been assaulted or encountered an uncomfortable situation...I think, too, people just think that sexual assault looks one way or they don’t even know what it is.”

Williams pointed out that sexual assault can happen in a number of ways, and some students “really don’t have the vocabulary” to talk about assault or explain what happened to them because they don’t recognize it as assault. The goal of the film and conversation is to expand students’ understanding of assault and consent.

The film, “The Bystander Moment,” will address the bystander approach developed by Jackson Katz and his colleagues. This approach encourages bystanders to intervene, and the movie will also break down peer culture dynamics that allow assault and gender-based violence to occur.

It’s important to Williams that the library offers programming like this. She said the library is a “repository of knowledge,” and it’s up to the librarians to share that knowledge with students and community members. Lovejoy Library will also have a display with various resources related to sexual assault and Sexual Assault Awareness Month throughout April. She hopes to see many students and community members at the free event on April 10.

“A lot of students are uncomfortable with talking about sexual assault, and I just want to see how we can break down the stigma about such subjects, because this is not something to shy away from,” Williams added. “The number of women, especially, who’ve been sexually assaulted is too high in this country, and we all can prevent this. So that’s what I want people to take away from this.”

For more information about the event, call Lovejoy Library at (618) 650-4636.

If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual assault and is in need of support, resources are available. The National Sexual Assault Hotline can provide

confidential assistance and connect you with services in your area. They can be reached at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or through their online chat at rainn.org. Remember, you are not alone, and help is available.