March 12, 2013

**SAMPLE: LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

# In Steubenville and across the U.S., we need to support survivors of sexual violence

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Dear Editor:

As the trial of two high school football players charged with rape is underway in Steubenville, the national spotlight has returned to this small Ohio town.  While this may seem to be an isolated incident, sexual assault occurs with alarming frequency in communities everywhere, including [insert your community's name].  Approximately 743,000 adult women in Ohio are survivors of rape.  One in four girls and one in six boys are sexually victimized before age 18.

The Steubenville case reminds us that there are many things individuals and communities everywhere can do to support survivors and encourage the prevention of sexual assault.  Adults must commit to modeling respectful behavior for our youth. It's our role to encourage appropriate social behavior, in person and online, including online, academic learning, and responsible citizenship.  We must resist fostering a sense of entitlement among athletes of all ages, and we must not tolerate illegal, sexist or demeaning behavior from one another, our leaders, or our youth.

I challenge each of us to choose to believe survivors, reserving judgment and blame, and support them in accessing the services they need to obtain justice and healing.  Survivors of sexual assault or abuse are always in our midst, whether we realize it or not.  A loved one may even be a survivor without our knowing it.  Our words, actions, and support can have a tremendous impact on them.  If you are a survivor, know that you are not alone and that help is available by calling [insert your hotline # here].

Amid the spotlight on Steubenville, we all have a valuable opportunity to consider how we can prevent sexual assault and support survivors in our own communities.  Each of us has a role to play in creating a safer community, so let's take this opportunity to do something that makes a difference.

Sincerely,
[Your Name], [Your Title]
[Your Organization]
[Organization Address]
[Phone]
[Email]