

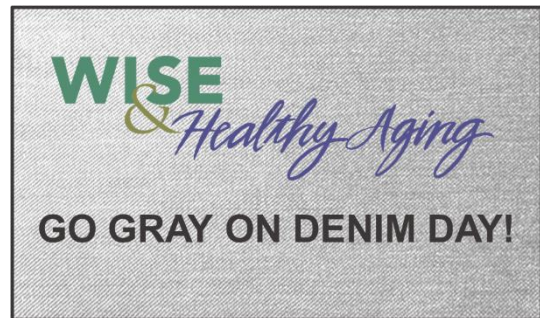


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WISE & Healthy Aging Goes Gray on Denim Day

Raise Your Voice Against Sexual Violence on April 26

SANTA MONICA, CALIF. (April 25, 2023) – April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and Denim Day, April 26, is the day where members of the community, officials, businesses, and students are called on to make a social statement by wearing jeans to spread awareness and protest the misconceptions that surround sexual violence.



This year, WISE & Healthy Aging, a community-based, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the dignity and quality of life of older adults, will be taking a stand against the sexual assault of older adults by wearing jeans and their “Go Gray on Denim Day” gray t-shirts.

Why wear jeans to protest sexual assault?

Denim Day was launched by Peace Over Violence in 1999, as part of an international protest following the Italian Supreme Court’s 1998 decision to overturn a rape conviction because the justices felt that since the 18-year-old female victim wore tight jeans, she must have helped her rapist remove them, thereby implying her consent. The next day, women in the Italian Parliament began wearing jeans to work to protest the ruling, and it soon became a world-wide movement.

“While sexual abuse is reported to occur most often in younger people, it is often not reported when it happens to an older adult,” said Rachel Tate, Vice President of Ombudsman Services at WISE & Healthy Aging.

According to research compiled by the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, studies show that sexual assault in older adults is highly underreported, and survivors are hesitant to reach out for help. The research also shows that sexual assault in older adults is often perpetuated by people who have easy access to older individuals, with one study showing that 40% of perpetrators were the spouse of the victim. Many also see sexual assault in later life as a problem isolated to nursing homes.

While this is an issue in some nursing homes, reported cases of elder sexual abuse show that 72% occurred in private homes, while just 23% occurred in facilities and almost 5% occurred in other locations.

“We are still a society that sees rape as a crime of passion and older adults as not being sexual beings, which is a barrier in terms of people believing that sexual assault happens to older people,” added Tate. “As an organization who has been advocating for older adults for more than 50 years, and working with older survivors of sexual abuse, we must call attention to this serious social issue.”

To find support for survivors of sexual assault, contact the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673.

About WISE & Healthy Aging

WISE & Healthy Aging is a multiservice, community-based nonprofit organization serving older adults and their families and caregivers throughout Los Angeles County. Headquartered in Santa Monica, the team at WISE & Healthy Aging works to advance the dignity and quality of life of older adults through leadership, advocacy and high-quality, innovative services. As the voice for disabled and older adult residents in long-term care facilities throughout Los Angeles County for more than 40 years, WISE & Healthy Aging has also operated the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in San Bernardino County since April 2022.