

Survivor Empowerment Center

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24 Hour Hotline
618-529-2324 or
800-334-2094

TTY Numbers
866-979-6636 or 618-351-1706

Main Location
Domestic Violence Shelter
Rape Crisis Services
Administrative Offices
610 S. Thompson Street
Carbondale, IL 62901
618-549-4807
FAX: 618-529-1802

Marion Office
1111 Anker Drive
Marion, IL 62959
FAX: 618-993-3178
Rape Crisis Services
618-933-0803
Domestic Violence Program
618-997-0949

Franklin County Office
Franklin County Courthouse
Benton, IL 62812
618-435-9800, ex.319
FAX: 618-439-4119

Saline County Office
Bonan Business Center
540 N. Commercial Dr. Suite 320
Harrisburg, IL 62946
618-294-8641
www.empoweringsurvivors.org

"I never would have believed..."

For months into years – and still at times today – “I can do this” was the affirmation Marissa continually repeated to herself following her 2015 sexual assault. Some days it was much harder than others. But with ongoing support and encouragement from her mother and others, she has regained control of her life and can now exercise the power she once felt robbed of.

Now the Human Resource Specialist at Survivor Empowerment Center, Marissa said “I sought out this job even though I knew there are times where it will be triggering. I want to give back to people who were in my shoes.”

The path has been neither easy nor full of linear improvement. It’s been full of fear, and anger, and despair, and doubt, and anger, and re-traumatization. And more anger.

“For the first eight weeks after my assault the only times I left my house were to go to the police station or to therapy,” Marissa said. “After a couple of months, I finally went to Walmart by myself; grudgingly; and found I wasn’t quite as afraid anymore.”

Unlike the majority of sexual assault victims, Marissa did not know her perpetrator. “Because I didn’t know them, I thought it could be anyone. I was afraid of everyone. I was angry with everyone.”

Marissa was drugged, slipped a date-rape drug by an acquaintance of a friend who had met them at a local bar. “My friend mentioned that my behavior was not normal for me, but then left me alone with someone I didn’t know at all.”

She immediately called a friend, who encouraged her to tell her mother about the assault. Living with her mom at the time, Marissa - very grudgingly - did just that, with no intention of either going to the hospital or reporting the assault to police. Her mother, a Department of Corrections employee who regularly interacts with sex offenders, would have none of that.

“My mom said, ‘we’re going to the hospital’ and that was the end of the discussion. She was with me through the process of medical exam and police interviews, and I can’t remember the number of times I’ve said “Thank You” over the past seven years for making me do what I didn’t want to do at all.”

They were joined at the hospital by our medical/legal advocate, an acquaintance of Marissa’s who also offered comfort and support. She also received months of therapy from a Survivor Empowerment Center counselor and many more months of therapy from a private counselor.



"I never would have believed ..." from Page 1

She still needs to return to her therapist at times. "I can be all right for a while," Marissa said, "and then something would happen and I'd have given back the steps I thought I had gained."

Marissa's case was one of few that actually resulted in an arrest. According to data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, out of each 1000 sexual assaults in this country, only 50 result in an arrest. Her case was one of the 50.

The legal process was also frustrating, filled with lapses in communication regarding a plea deal and broken promises and victim blaming from the State's Attorney office.

"My mom and Nancy Maxwell from Survivor Empowerment Center knew my rights and helped smooth my way through the process," Marissa said. "Nancy did her job," Marissa

said, "she advocated for me and insisted I be allowed to provide a Victim Impact Statement and had me request financial restitution for my medical and therapy costs."

"There are many times I wanted to throw in the towel," Marissa said, "to just give up."

"But I know now that there is a progression to getting better," she said, "and I realize that acceptance is an important part of the healing process."

And she believes that coming to work for Survivor Empowerment Center is an important part of that progression.

"Even now, it's not ever a case of rainbows and butterflies," Marissa said, "but in my darkest place I never would have believed I would have the life that I have today."

"In my darkest place, I never would have believed I would have the life that I have today."



April Open House Schedule

Visit one of our four Southern Illinois offices, view our survivor Clothesline Project, enjoy some snacks and interact with our staff and learn about our services.

Tuesday, April 12 11am-1pm	540 N. Commercial Drive, Suite 320, Harrisburg
Tuesday, April 19 11am – 1pm	1111 Anker Drive, Marion (next to DMV)
Friday, April 22 11am-1pm	Franklin County Courthouse, Benton
Tuesday, April 26 11am-1pm	610 S. Thompson Street, Carbondale

“I’m asking you to get angry...”

I received a phone call last month from a woman who was angry. She was angry at the beginning of the call, consistently yet articulately communicated that anger during the majority of our 45-minute conversation, and was quite obviously still angry when she hung up.

She was not necessarily angry at me. Rather, she called partially to offer positive feedback on a column I wrote more than two years ago that included the following sentences:

“We’ve conveniently labeled Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence among ‘women’s issues’ for decades. They are not. They are men’s issues because it is predominantly men who are the perpetrators.”

No. Her anger was raging because she saw precious little evidence that men were taking responsibility for their own actions, and plenty of evidence that society as a whole has created a litany of extenuating circumstances that condone men having sexual contact with a woman without consent.

If only she was wrong. If only she was merely deluded and hers was the only voice speaking out against the pervasiveness of rape culture.

She is not.

Chanel Miller, formerly referred to as Emily Doe and the victim of Stanford swimmer Brock Turner’s 2015 rape, documents the ebb and flow of her own anger in the book “Know My Name”, but succinctly expresses our pervasive attitude toward rape and rape survivors.

“You will find society asking you for the happy ending, saying come back when you’re better, when what you say can make us feel good, when you have something more uplifting, affirming.”

And to that statement I must admit that I am “Guilty as charged.” In this, the tenth newsletter that I’ve created for us, I’ve sought out the uplifting and affirming, frequently progressing far too quickly through the pain and the anger in order to arrive at the “happy ending”.

It’s understandable. As a donor or other stakeholder with ties to Survivor Empowerment Center, you want to see that your contribution is making a positive difference. You want to read stories like the one in this edition about Marissa: about how she has overcome so much since her assault, and how she is now giving back to other survivors in part because of how we have helped and continue to help her.

But I do a disservice to our survivors, our organization and you as stakeholders when I rush to get through the pain and the anger.

In the introduction to her book “Asking For It”, author Kate Harding implores the reader to do better.

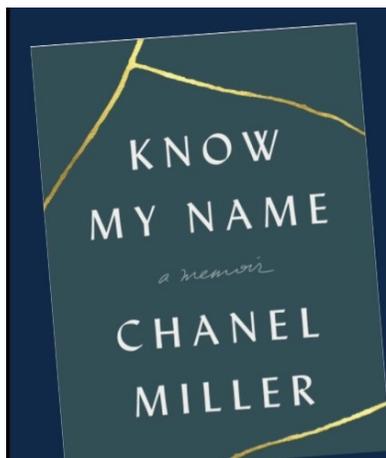
“Picturing a female loved one enduring a violent crime may be a good way to work up anger against a hypothetical criminal, but it doesn’t create genuine identification with and compassion for victims. In many cases, it will just send somebody off on a hero fantasy about beating the rotten hypothetical bastard up, or shooting him dead, before they’ve even had time to wonder how their wife, mother, daughter or sister is hypothetically feeling.

“With this book, I’m asking you to do better than that. I’m asking you to imagine it’s you who was raped. And I’m asking you to get angry about it.”

A month ago, I wondered why that woman on the other end of the phone was so angry.

Now I wonder why I was not.

Column written by John Pfeifer



“Rape required inflicting harm on somebody. The moment I was violently dragged into his story, my story stopped. When I was finally out of his hands, or rather when his hands slipped out of me, I was released back into life. But it was during that brief passing over, that period when he took the reins, where I lost everything.”

Chanel Miller, Stanford rape survivor



610 South Thompson Street Carbondale, Illinois 62901

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Thank you for your continued involvement and the support you provide.

Return this form to: Survivor Empowerment Center 610 S. Thompson Street Carbondale, IL 62901

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I wish to contribute \$500 _____ \$350 _____ \$250 _____ \$125 _____ \$ (other amount) _____

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