

An Opportunity To Discuss The “Silent Crime”

(NAPSA)—An annual initiative by California and other states seeks to prevent sexual violence and provide resources to the victims of sexual assault and rape, and to their families.

“Sexual assault is a serious criminal, public health and human rights’ issue facing our nation,” said Marybeth Carter, executive director of the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA). “There are an estimated 400,000 forcible rapes that occur in the United States each year, with 10,000 occurring in California. Yet, sexual assault still persists as the ‘silent crime,’ since more than 70 percent of rapes are never reported to police.”

Carter maintains that a key factor of reducing the instances of sexual assault is creating environments that are intolerant of any kind of sexual harassment or violence.

“The social environment that we create and keep tells us what is and isn’t appropriate,” said Carter. “Together, men and women must take responsibility for creating environments that make everyone comfortable and do not send the signal that it is permissible to sexually violate another.”

Carter said designating the month of April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month provides an occasion for schools, community organizations and individuals to work to increase public awareness of the prevalence of this problem and to consider ways they can mobilize individually and collectively to fight it.

“As an ardent supporter of sexual assault victims’ rights and

Sexual Assault Awareness Month provides a forum for discussing sexual violence.

an author of legislation to protect these rights, I encourage Californians to take advantage of the educational and prevention resources available during Sexual Assault Awareness Month,” said Assembly Member Judy Chu, D-Monterey Park. “Working together, we can combat this serious problem that affects more than 10,000 Californians each year and provide the support these victims need to heal in the aftermath of this horrific crime.”

California’s rape crisis centers offer support services for sexual assault survivors, as well as self-defense classes and other prevention activities. A listing of the centers, as well as information on Sexual Assault Awareness Month, can be found at www.calcasa.org.