

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

You: A Caring, Compassionate Volunteer?

(NAPSA)—Though the effects of sexual assault can last a lifetime, the work of a dedicated network of caring, compassionate volunteers goes a long way toward helping victims start the healing process.

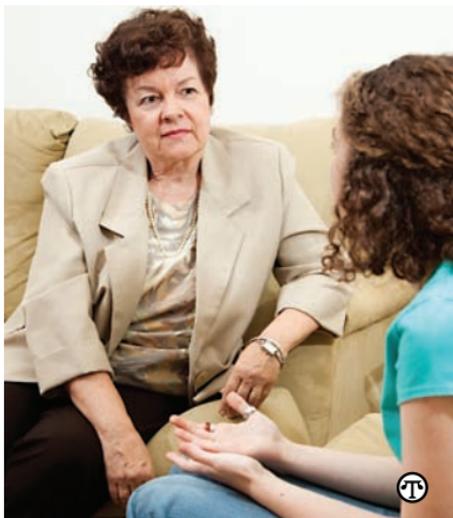
Assault Statistics

Every two minutes, an American is sexually assaulted. No matter what form it takes, the effects of this crime leave lasting scars. Victims of sexual violence are three times more likely to suffer from depression, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol and four times more likely to contemplate suicide.

Critical support comes in the form of volunteers who work at local rape crisis centers as well as through the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-HOPE), created and operated by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). These resources can provide support services moments after the assault or even years later, allowing any survivor to find the help he or she needs to recover.

Rape crisis centers specialize in victim advocacy and provide victims with support and information on recovery; here, volunteers play a vital role in serving members of their own community. No prior experience or training is necessary to become a volunteer—just the desire to join the fight against sexual assault.

There are a variety of options and positions for volunteering, with flexible schedule options to fit almost anyone's time constraints. Some choose to work directly with victims. These positions include helping callers to the 24-hour crisis telephone hotline and even accompanying victims to the hospital. Others find positions volunteering in the main office, fundraising or reaching out to the local media. Individual crisis centers



America's rape crisis centers are in need of volunteers to provide support and information to victims of sexual violence.

greatly benefit from the hard work of volunteers.

The National Sexual Assault Hotline is a partnership of over 1,100 rape crisis centers all across the United States. The hotline is unique in that it routes callers to their nearest center, based on their phone number. Since it began in 1994, the 24/7 confidential hotline services have helped more than 1.2 million people nationwide.

Many rape crisis center volunteers find their work to be a very worthwhile experience. Kacey Fisher, a RAINN hotline volunteer, says, "Empowering survivors to realize their own definition of what they can or want to do on their road to healing is the most rewarding aspect of being a RAINN volunteer."

To find a volunteer opportunity in your area, visit rainn.org and click on "Get Involved." The search function allows visitors to search for volunteer opportunities based on their ZIP code.