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Mayor Barrett and MPS Superintendent Driver Call on Milwaukee to Wear Denim April 29

*Denim Day Milwaukee part of international day to support survivors
and challenge misconceptions around sexual assault*

MILWAUKEE – One week before Denim Day, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and Dr. Darienne Diver, Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, are calling on the Milwaukee community members to pledge their support for local survivors of sexual assault by participating in Denim Day, an international awareness day, on April 29.

“Denim Day is about survivors and community members uniting and making a statement against the misconceptions that surround sexual assault,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “I encourage employers, organizations, and individuals throughout the community to wear jeans as a message that we stand with survivors, and that we won’t accept anything less than a culture shift around sexual assault in our community.”

In the United States, one in six women and one in 33 men are victims of sexual assault. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that more than half of rapes and assaults go unreported, a common reason being that many victims feel they won’t be believed or they will be blamed for their attack. Raising awareness is the first step toward prevention.

“Sexual assault is an issue that affects our entire community,” said Dr. Darienne Driver, Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, and co-chair of Denim Day Milwaukee. “I ask Milwaukee to stand in support of survivors by wearing jeans on April 29, and using Denim Day to start a communitywide conversation around prevention and the misconceptions that exist around assault.”

This is the fifth year Milwaukee will mark Denim Day. The day began after an Italian woman was raped by her driving instructor. The instructor was convicted, but the sentence was overturned after a court determined that because the victim wore tight jeans and may have helped remove them, the attack on her was consensual sex. The verdict motivated women in the Italian Parliament to wear jeans in solidarity with the victim. The movement has now spread into an international awareness day during Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Those interested in participating can follow the Denim Day Milwaukee Facebook page, and find tool kits and materials at www.denimdaymke.org and www.denimdayusa.org.

Denim Day Milwaukee is coordinated by a collaborative group of organizations, and supports the local work of The Healing Center, Pathfinders, and Aurora Health Care’s Sexual Assault Treatment Center, as well as other local sexual assault service providers.

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