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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2016

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Mayor Barrett and Commissioner of Health Call on Milwaukee to Wear Denim April 27

Denim Day Milwaukee part of international day to support survivors, challenge myths around sexual assault

MILWAUKEE – With Denim Day Milwaukee days away, Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, are calling on the Milwaukee community to pledge support for local survivors of sexual assault by participating in Denim Day, an international awareness campaign, on April 27.

“Denim Day is about survivors and community members standing together,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “I encourage employers, organizations, and individuals throughout the community to wear jeans as a message of support for survivors. Milwaukee remains dedicated in our efforts to continue the conversation, raise awareness of this issue, and involve all segments of our community to end sexual violence.”

Sexual assault is an unacceptable and prevalent crime in the United States. The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey estimates that nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives. When considering sexual violence victimization other than rape, the same report estimates that nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men have had these experiences at some point in their lives. As many victims feel they won’t be believed or they will be blamed for the assault, these numbers are likely underestimates.

“Sexual assault is an issue that affects our entire community,” said Bevan K. Baker, Commissioner of Health. “This year, we urge the Milwaukee community to stand with all survivors and to engage men and boys in the conversation about prevention. Not only are men often the perpetrators of sexual violence, but we must acknowledge that men and boys are also victims of these crimes themselves and need communitywide support.”

Denim 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 find toolkits and materials at www.denimdaymke.org.

Denim Day Milwaukee is coordinated and supported by a collaborative group of organizations, including the City of Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the City of Milwaukee Health Department Office of Violence Prevention.

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