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River Region United Way

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River Region United Way Agency Impact Story:

Lighthouse Counseling Center's STAR program

For many victims of sexual assault, the aftermath of the attack can be nearly as traumatic as the attack itself. Having to go through police interviews, filing reports and undergoing medical exams can amplify the feelings of fear and shame that many victims face.

The Lighthouse Counseling Center's STAR (Standing Together Against Rape) program works to make the entire process less traumatic for victims of sexual assault.

Jessica McKinnon has first-hand knowledge of the comfort that STAR provides to rape victims.

McKinnon was raped by a family acquaintance when she was 13 years old. After she told her mother, they went to the police, and then to STAR.

"The people there were very helpful to me and my mom," Jessica said.

Trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners volunteer their time and expertise to assist in collecting evidence and examining victims after the assault. Forensic examinations have to follow specific criteria and methods of collection in order for the evidence to be admissible in a court case.



Jessica McKinnon is working to help girls in the area avoid sexual assaults like the one she went through at age 13.

STAR volunteers also work to assist the victim emotionally in the aftermath of the rape, staying with the victim during the exam and making sure the process is as smooth as possible for the victim and her family.

For Jessica, living through the aftermath of being raped has led to a determination to help other young women. Now 27, the military veteran is promoting empowerment for girls through a nonprofit she founded.

"I enjoy helping people," Jessica said. "And I want to keep girls from going through what I did."

Advancing the Common Good