Patty first met her Center for Community Solutions (CCS) advocate one year ago. As a child, Patty had told her mother she was being sexually abused, but her mother didn’t believe or support her. She kept the abuse a secret for almost 30 years until, after decades of bottled-up pain, she confided in her husband and eventually called us at CCS where she was connected to a Sexual Assault Victim Advocate (SAVA). Our advocate listened to her story and asked what she would like to do next. After brainstorming with her SAVA, Patty decided that even if the chances of prosecution were slim, she wanted to make a police report so there would be a written record of the abuse she endured.

Patty and her SAVA went to the police station and filed a report. For the first time in her life, Patty was sharing her story with people who believed and supported her. From that moment, her focus shifted from

Survivors of sexual assault often find themselves in complicated criminal justice proceedings and social service systems. CCS’ Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy (SAVA) program helps survivors navigate these complicated systems with free and confidential in-person advocacy, crisis intervention, and referral services. Our SAVA staff offer non-judgmental, respectful, and empathic support, along with information and resources based on the individualized needs of the survivor.

To maximize the safety of our clients, SAVAs advocate within social service, housing, financial, legal, medical, and educational systems, and coordinate sexual assault services in conjunction with the countywide Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), local law enforcement, and the District Attorney’s office.

Through SAVA, clients are empowered and given the knowledge and support they need to make informed decisions on their own journey to healing.

PATTY’S STORY — THE ART OF HEALING

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As the only Rape Crisis Center in San Diego, CCS responds through our SART volunteers within 20 minutes of a call from law enforcement once a rape or sexual assault is reported. CCS SART volunteers stay with the victims to provide whatever support and advocacy they choose. With the help of over 60 SART volunteers who have received intensive training to respond to these calls, we are by their side 24/7.

**Here is a spotlight on one of our SART volunteers, Shanyn Sprague**

When Shanyn describes her role as a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) volunteer for CCS, she is often met with surprise followed by questions of how and why she became involved with CCS.

“I do what I do because someone has to, because I have seen far too many lives impacted by sexual violence, and because I am proud to be part of the solution,” Shanyn explains.

Every time she walks into our SART facility where the forensic exams take place, she knows she is playing a brief but significant role in her client’s life.

“My entire interaction with that person is based on one question: What can I do for you? For those few hours, my client is my top priority. I am a hand to squeeze, a shoulder to lean on, and, for some, the one person who listens when they say ‘Leave me alone.’”

As her clients walk out into the world, she sends them with all her best wishes and hopes that they continue to get the help they need.

“Being a SART advocate has been one of the best and most rewarding things I have done with my life. In the 3½ years I have been with CCS, each client I have worked with has taught me something about myself, about healing, and about the importance of having a hand to hold.”

Thank you, Shanyn, and all of our SART volunteers for being there for our survivors when they need it most!

**Patty has given permission to share this information in our newsletter.**

suppressing memories of the abuse to actively healing from it. She joined support groups at CCS and attended a CCS retreat for survivors of sexual assault. She was also given the opportunity to attend a week-long retreat in Ojai sponsored by a CCS partner agency. Through these experiences, Patty explored different healing modalities and found that creating art helped her heal the most.

Since then, Patty has been inspired to introduce other survivors to the restorative powers of art and started a workshop at our Project SafeHouse emergency shelter where she helps residents color, paint, sculpt, and write love letters to themselves. “Art is a beautiful tool for healing,” says Patty. “It helps people get their mind off the chaos by focusing on creating something new.”

This spring Patty’s artwork was featured at The Power of Feminine Energy exhibit at the Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park. The exhibit celebrated International Women’s Day and showcased the work of more than 50 local women artists in San Diego. Patty’s art draws from her experience as a survivor, and she has decided to donate the proceeds from her sales to CCS. “People can use the power of art to discuss issues that matter to them. For me, I’m using my art as my voice.”

**Patty has given permission to share this information in our newsletter.**
CCS is excited to announce AnnaLynne McCord, actress, writer, director and producer as our celebrity guest speaker at this year’s signature Tea & Tonic Event which will be held on May 26th at the Fairmont Grand Del Mar starting at 1 pm.

Known for playing the vixen, vamp and roles of a darker nature, McCord first gained prominence in 2007 as the scheming Eden Lord on the FX television series Nip/Tuck. Followed by credits on CW’s 90210, TNT’s Dallas, Stalker on CBS, FOX’s Jerry Bruckheimer produced pilot, Lucifer and, currently, ABC’s Secrets and Lies.

McCord has contributed to various charities, stating that she is “working with organizations and giving back has been her saving grace as it has taught her how to rescue herself.” She is the President of Together1Heart which empowers women and children victimized by human-trafficking and sexual violence.

In 2014, McCord revealed that when she was 18 she was sexually assaulted by a male friend. In March of 2015, while speaking at the United Nations in support of their Women for Peace Association (UNWFPA), McCord announced her alignment with the NO MORE Campaign. As a speaker and activist, McCord continues to engage audiences at colleges and events with her candid outlook on sex, and advocacy against sexual violence and slavery.

Please join us on Thursday, May 26, 2016 from 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm at Fairmont Grand Del Mar for an afternoon of high tea, inspiration and celebration, as we welcome AnnaLynne McCord when she shares her journey of being a tireless and passionate advocate for sexual abuse and human trafficking.

For event information and reservations, please contact Gabrielle Conley at (858) 272-5777, ext. 120 or gconley@ccssd.org.
Every April, Sexual Assault Awareness Month (“SAAM”) events take place around the country to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities on how to prevent it. These events can be traced back as far as the 1970s when women organized Take Back the Night marches in England as a reaction to the escalated violence they encountered walking the streets at night. Protests quickly mobilized across the globe and in 1978, San Francisco and New York City held the first Take Back the Night events in the United States.

Over time, awareness activities spread throughout the entire month of April and the United States observed its first SAAM nationally in 2001. This year, SAAM is celebrated its 15th anniversary with the theme “Prevention is Possible” to help individuals, communities and the private sector understand how they can take action to promote safety, respect, and equality to stop sexual assault before it happens.

Our prevention and education team at CCS was involved in SAAM events throughout the county with information tables and outreach educational workshops on Sexual Assault, Consent, Bystander Intervention, and Healthy Communication About Sex, at MCAS Miramar, Naval Base San Diego, Cal State San Marcos, Cuyamaca College, San Diego City College, and RI International Behavior Health Facility, to name a few. Staff from other departments were also involved with the Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night events at University of California San Diego, University of San Diego, San Diego State University, Palomar College, and Mira Costa College.

Everyone can play a role to prevent sexual assault during SAAM and all year round. The most important message to share is that communication and consent prevent sexual assault. So: Ask before you act, WAIT for an answer without pressure, and RESPECT the boundaries they set!

For information on how to access our Prevention and Education presentations and resources, please contact us at 858-272-5777.