

# ANNUAL REPORT

## ST. CROIX VALLEY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

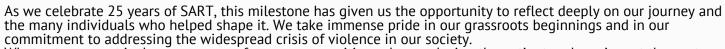
1200 Hosford St. Suite 203 Hudson, WI 54016

715-425-6443

www.stcroixvalleysart.org

## **Executive Summary**

#### **FY 2024-2025 Overview**



What sets us apart is the way we care for our communities—always placing the patient and survivor at the center of our work, walking alongside them on what is often a difficult path toward healing.

We are profoundly grateful to those who once saw a bold vision—something that hadn't been done in our area before—and took on the challenging task of building a nonprofit from the ground up. The work was undoubtedly difficult, but enough people believed that survivors of sexual assault deserved better. Because of that belief, SART not only exists today, but continues to thrive.

This past year marked continued growth, as more people have come to know the support and resources we offer. We are proud to be able to answer that call.

Our future is bright, thanks to an incredibly talented and committed team, and a board of directors whose dedication ensures we remain strong and focused on our mission.

73
FORENSIC

PEDIATRIC FORENSIC EXAMS

16 Strangulation Exams

HUMAN Trafficing Exams

VIOLENCE PREVENTION
EDUCATION
PRESENTATIONS

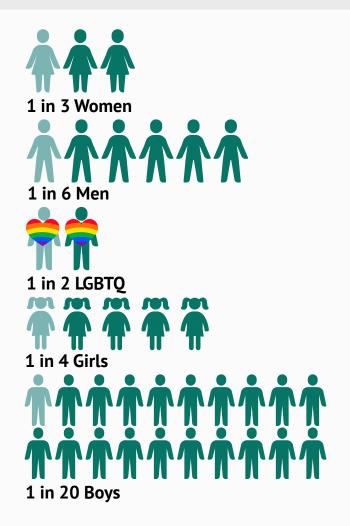
## The scope of sexual violence

According to the CDC sexual violence is a significant problem in the United States.

Sexual violence is sexual activity when consent is not obtained or freely given. It impacts every community and affects both sexes and people of all sexual orientations and ages. Anyone can experience or perpetrate sexual violence.

The perpetrator of sexual violence is usually someone the survivor knows.

Sexual violence has a profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being.

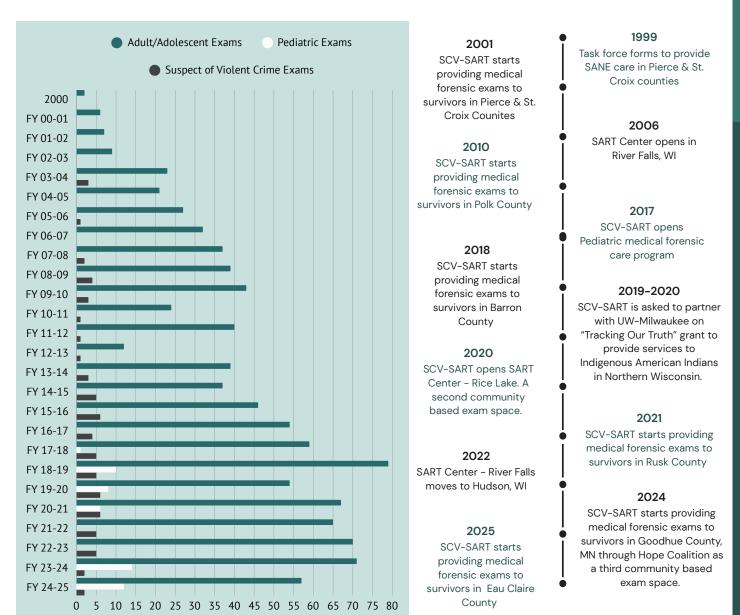


# History of St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team

St. Croix Valley SART began when task force members Ann Gustafson, St. Croix County Victim Witness Specialist; Barb LaVigne, Social Worker, Baldwin Area Medical Center; and Pam Bellrichard, Pierce County Victim Witness Specialist, learned about Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) providing expert care to victims of sexual assault.

St. Croix Valley SART was formed to be an independent entity, which allowed services to be provided in multiple hospital settings. SCV-SART began providing medical forensic exams to victims/survivors of sexual assault in Pierce and St. Croix Counties in 2001. The SART Center, a free, comprehensive victim services center, was developed and opened in October 2006. The SART Center provided a community-based site for victims of sexual assault and interpersonal violence. The SART center also offered confidential 24-hour telephone services. This was the first independent, non-profit, comprehensive victim treatment center in the Midwest to provide both SANE forensic services and Victim Advocacy. For the first time in western Wisconsin, there was an alternative to hospital-based Emergency Rooms care after a sexual assault occurred.

St. Croix Valley SART has continued to grow, adding new programs, services, and care locations over the years to better serve survivors of sexual violence. We have added many additional hospital partnerships in multiple new counties, 2 additional non-hospital community based sites, as well as multiple partnering advocacy agencies, and a violence prevention education program. Our goal is to not only respond to interpersonal violence with trauma informed forensic nursing care, but to reduce and prevent violence within our communities through resources and education.





### **About Us**

St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team is a 501c3 non-profit; providing medical exams, forensic evidence collection, outreach and violence prevention education for survivors of all ages of interpersonal violence, strangulation, human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Barron, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, and St. Croix counties in Wisconsin, and Goodhue County in Minnesota. We are staffed by an Executive Director, Operational Manager, Community Outreach & Prevention Education Coordinator, Forensic Nurse Coordinator, Forensic Nurse Supervisor, Forensic RNs, and countless volunteers.

## MISSION

Our Mission is to improve community health and safety by providing comprehensive services and resources that respond to and prevent interpersonal violence. St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team works to end sexual violence through providing comprehensive support and medical services to Victim/Survivors as well as encouraging and teaching social change. We believe through proactive education we can change societal norms and beliefs that allows sexual violence to continue to be perpetrated in our society.

## New streamlined access to follow up care:

Most survivors of assault have a lot to deal with in the aftermath. The emotional trauma makes it hard to focus on legal, medical and financial follow up. One of the main things that gets forgotten or delayed is the follow-up medical care.

This year we have partnered with 6 local Health Department's Reproductive Health programs to provide access to this care. Together with Pierce and St. Croix counties staff we developed a referral/release form that our patients can sign. A nurse will call them and help them schedule an appointment for STI and Pregnancy testing and any other medical or supportive care. We provide a list of the services the patient might need so that they don't need to retell the assault.

In the spring of this year, we provided a SANE exam for a young woman who had been sexually assaulted and strangled in an underserved northern county. She was referred to a hospital in a neighboring county where we provided services. Due to the nature of this assault, she was at high risk for STI/HIV transmission and delayed effects of the strangulation. The county Reproductive Health nurse closest to her, was sent a referral.

Care from a public health clinic is valuable for people without insurance or a medical provider, or those who can't or don't want to use their insurance or see their medical provider. The same nurse will do all the follow up and provide the confidentiality and continuity of care needed in post assault and strangulation care.

#### **Counseling Voucher Program:**

St. Croix Valley SART's counseling voucher program supports survivors of sexual violence by providing access to and eliminating barriers around the cost of counseling and therapy.

This program allows survivors to gain relatively quick access to professional mental health support and counseling resources. St. Croix Valley SART covers the cost of professional licensed counselor therapy sessions for qualifying survivors. This program is made possible through community grants.

- Survivors find a provider of their choosing, and coordinate their individual care with the support of the advocacy coordinator.
- Survivors qualify for **5** sessions and can use up to **15** sessions per fiscal year.
- All survivors of sexual violence past or present can apply for the counseling voucher program. Priority is given to low-income, student, and uninsured survivors.
- 17 survivors have successfully completed the program between 2020-2025.

# 2024-2025 Funding Challenges

In fiscal year 2024-2025 St. Croix Valley SART faced significant funding loss due to a decrease in federal VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) funding, which resulted in state decreased funding in VOCA (Victims of Crime Act).

VOCA funds supported our direct advocacy services program - the bridge between the forensic nursing examination and "what's next" for sexual assault victim/survivors. Due to this funding loss, under the direction of the St. Croix Valley SART Board of Directors, SCV-SART closed its direct advocacy services program, as well as its Teen Support Group.

Additionally, SART lost funding from a major donor who had supported the organization for over 15 years, resulting in a 25% decrease in its operational budget.

Under the direction of the SCV-SART's Board of Directors we applied for and received one-time funding from WIS ACT 241, allowing for a transition from direct advocacy services and towards violence prevention education programing and maintaining staff.

The overall loss of funding could have been proven to be detrimental as the organization faced the possibility of closing our physical location, which not only allows staff to work as a team collaboratively and cohesively, but is where we see and provide care for pediatric victim/survivors and 15-20% of our adult/adolescent victim/survivor patients. Due to the generosity of the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, a one-time bridge funding opportunity was received to address funding gaps and support the organization's resiliency.

SART's violence prevention education program funding from WIS ACT 241 has ended as of June 30, 2025.

After extensive research in-house by staff and a professional grant writer, there are no funding opportunities available for violence prevention education. With no grant funding available, a decision will need to be made on the continuation of this unique and impactful program that aligns with SART's mission and vision.

#### **BARRON COUNTY**

#### **Cumberland Health**

1705 16th Avenue Cumberland, WI 54829

Marshfield Medical Center - Rice Lake 1700 West Stout St. Rice Lake, WI 54868

Mayo Clinic Health System – Northland 1222 E. Woodland Ave Barron, WI 54812

#### Community-Based Exam Site:

St. Croix Valley SART Inc. 33 Ann Street Rice Lake, WI 54868

#### **GOODHUE COUNTY**

#### **Community-Based Exam Site:**

Hope Coalition 1926 Old W Main Street Red Wing, MN 55066

#### **POLK COUNTY**

**Amery Regional Medical Center** 265 Griffin Street East Amery, WI 54001

#### Osceola Medical Center

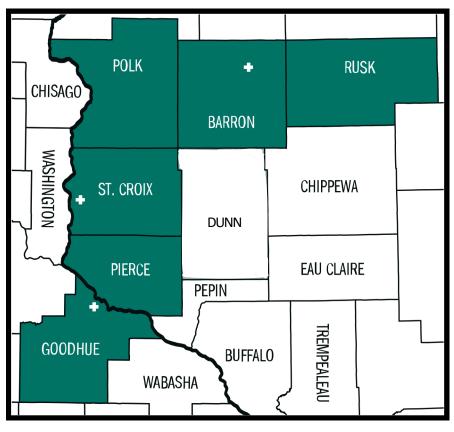
2600 65th Ave Osceola, WI 54020

#### St. Croix Health

235 State St. St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

#### **RUSK COUNTY**

Marshfield Medical Center - Ladysmith 1200 Port Arthur Rd Ladysmith, WI 54848



#### **ST. CROIX COUNTY**

#### **Hudson Hospital**

405 Stageline Road Hudson, WI 54016

#### **River Falls Area Hospital**

1629 E Division Street River Falls, WI 54022

#### Western WI Health

1100 Bergslien Street Baldwin, WI 54002

#### **Westfields Hospital**

535 Hospital Road New Richmond, WI 54017

#### Community-Based Exam Site:

St. Croix Valley SART Inc. 1200 Hosford Street Suite 203 Hudson, WI 54016

## **Locations of Care**

We partner with eleven different local and rural hospitals to provide care for victims in their own communities. In addition, we have three non-hospital-based exam locations for a more private and calm forensic exam. These are located in Hudson, WI, Rice Lake, WI and Red Wing, MN.

## **Board of Directors**

Peter G. Potts-Shufelt, Chair MSN,RN,CEN

Laura Doebereiner, Vice Chair CSW Barron County

Pam Bellrichard, Secretary and Founding Member Victim Witness – St. Croix County

Joanne Obermueller, Treasurer SVP Finance/Human Resouces Manager Citizens State Bank

Ann Gustafson, Founding Member St. Croix County- Retired

Jody Douglas, member Instructor, CVTC

Tom Gunderson, Past Chair CVTC - River Falls Campus

Julie Dollahon, member Retired Pierce County

Peggy Webb, member Renaissance Academy

Holly Wood Webster, member ADA, Polk County

Kimberly Randall, MS LPC, member Owner-Randall Therapeutic Services LTD

Ellen Thompson, member Director of Risk, Compliance, and Quality Western Wisconsin Health

Courtney Meyer, RN Marshfield Medical Center-Ladysmith

Jordan Hasenberg, EA Hasenberg Financial Group

## **Staff and Nurses**

#### Melissa Vesperman

Executive Director & Forensic Nurse Coordinator

#### Wendy Dernovsek

Operational Manager

#### **Annelise Hughes-Thompson**

Community Outreach & Prevention Education Coordinator

#### Carolyn Kuether

Forensic Nurse Supervisor Staff



#### **Forensic Nursing Staff**

Melissa Vesperman
Jodi Simmons
Kelsey Green
Annie West
Dawn Quaderer
Allison Mork
Alex Fox
Mary Silsz-Chucka
Tonya Steines
Brandi Huber
Evyn Engelhardt
Chelsea Collins
Carolyn Kuether
Ashley Rannells
Michelle Koepp

## **Nursing**

St. Croix Valley SART nurses are dedicated to their community, learning, and providing victims of violence with the most compassionate and knowledgeable care possible. Our nurses come from a variety of backgrounds and locations. We are privileged enough to benefit from all of their varied experiences in care and it makes our staff not only well rounded but appreciative of caring for the whole patient. We have been very fortunate to be able to add to our talented nursing staff this year and are reaching all six areas of our coverage to allow for less patient wait time and more accessible care.

#### ◆ Adolescent/Adult Exams

Our nurses provide medical, forensic and post assault care for all ages starting at 13. This may include a medical history and exam, evidence collection of DNA, toxicology, clothing, and documentation of injuries. We offer medications to prevent pregnancy, infection, and referrals to support services and medical follow-up. Through trauma informed care we give the control back to the survivor by encouraging their participation in the process and decisions being made. This begins the road to healing.

#### Pediatric Exams

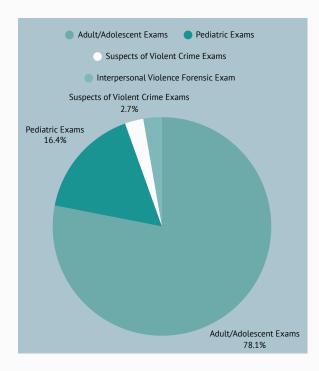
Children receive all the care and respect given to older patients. Their choices and comfort guide the exam, and family is involved in the process as much as possible. Our nurses have undergone special training, and two advocates are present during the exam to meet the needs of the child and their family. These exams are scheduled and done in the calm of our community-based exam sites in Hudson and Rice Lake.

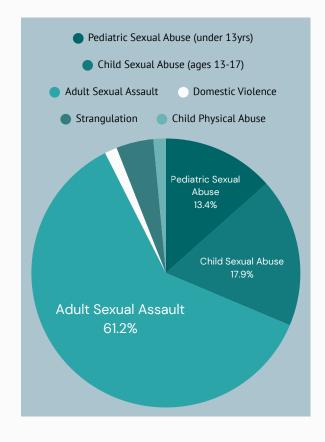
#### Strangulation Exams

Every patient is assessed for strangulation. There has been a rise in strangulation with sexual assaults and domestic violence. Recent research is showing long term physical and cognitive negative effects of strangulation. It has also been shown to signal a higher risk for homicide in the future. If strangulation has been identified medical evaluation and care is provided in an Emergency Department and follow up support is provided.

#### Suspects of Violent Crime Exams

Medical forensic exams are respectfully provided at the request of law enforcement for suspects of sexual assault and other violent crimes. We collect a medical history and forensic evidence based on a search warrant and/or the suspect's consent.



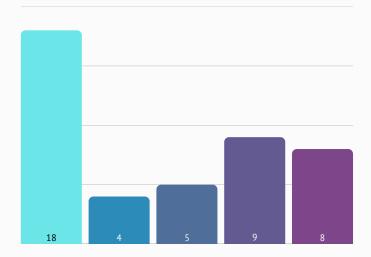


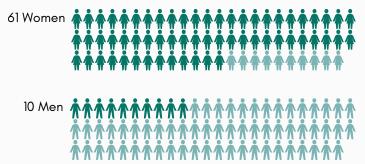
## **Nursing Demographics**

2024-2025 demographics of victim/survivors served via forensic medical exams

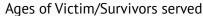


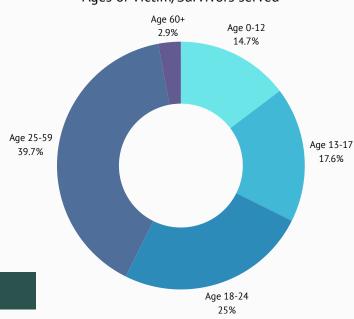
- Number of exams served an unhoused person
- Number of exams served a survivor of human trafficking
- Number of exams that were drug facilitated sexual assault cases
- Number of exams served a survivor of domestic violence

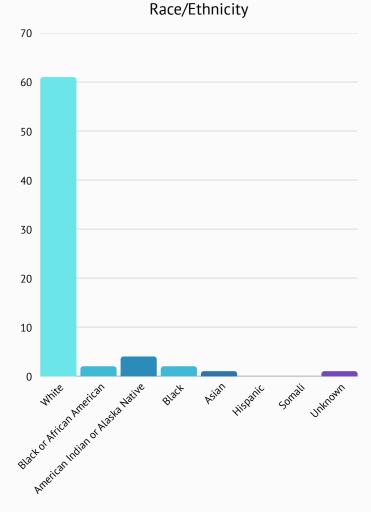




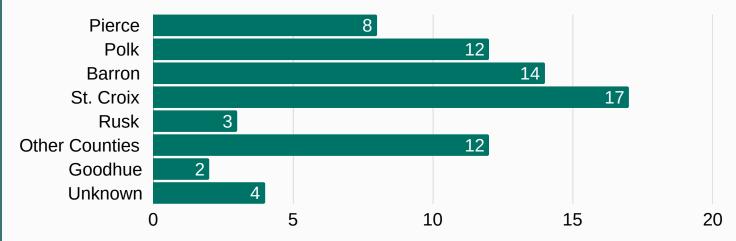
The 2024-2025 Fiscal year we did not provide a forensic medical exam to a survivor who identified as non-binary or transgender.

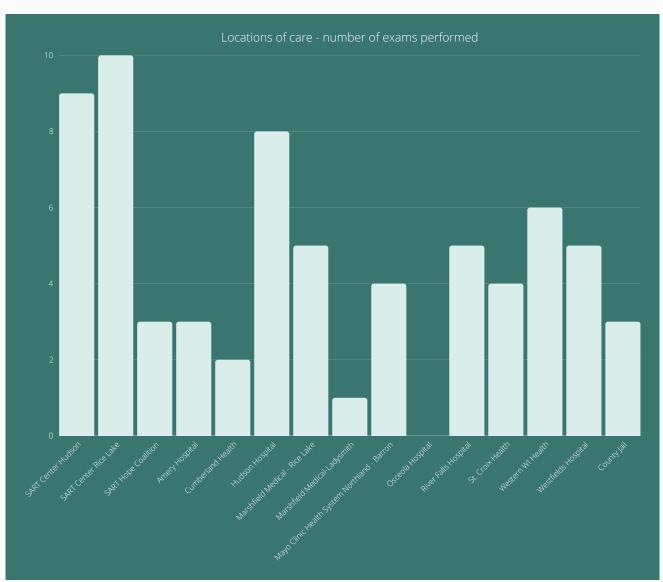




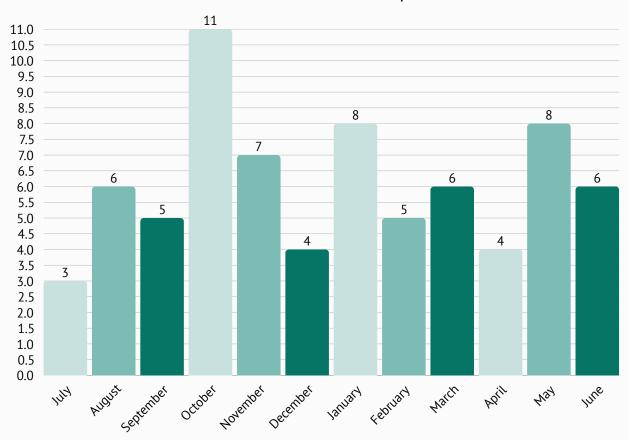


### Victim/Survivors Served - County Residency



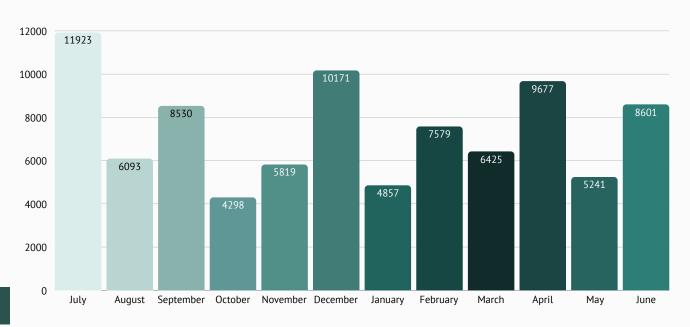


#### Number of forensic exams per month



## **Cost Per Exam**

The average cost per exam in FY 2024-2025 was \$6,700 based on general operating expenses for the fiscal year. St Croix Valley SART was reimbursed \$1,545.10 by the WI SAFE Fund (23% of actual cost) and \$1,486 by the State of MN (22%). If St. Croix Valley SART's actual costs were taken into consideration when states are determining their respective state's reimbursement rate of 2/3 of cost, SART would receive \$4,422.



## St. Croix Valley SART Funding

As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team, Inc. is primarily funded through community and foundation grants, public donations, and fundraising

#### 31%

#### **Community/Foundation Grants**

In fiscal year 2024-2025, eleven community/foundation grants were received in the amount of \$217,500.00.

> Community/Foundation Grants 31%

#### **7%**

#### **Fundraisers**

In fiscal year 2024-2025, St. Croix Valley SART held two major fundraising events: an inaugural Halloween Gala in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, and a golf scramble held at Spring Valley Golf Course in Spring Valley, Wisconsin. Both events were deemed a success.

#### **17%**

#### **SAFE Fund**

Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, the SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Exam) Fund provides reimbursement to healthcare providers for the cost of sexual assault forensic examinations. The current reimbursement rate of \$1,545.10 is 2/3 of the cost based on hospital program expenses and does not take into consideration St. Croix Valley SART's cost per exam.

#### **70/**0

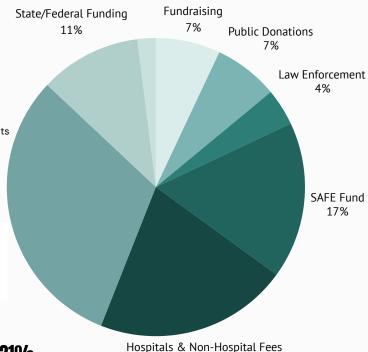
#### **Public Donations**

Public donations received throughout the fiscal year, including following presentations to 100 Women Who Care-Barron County, 100 Women Who Care-St. Croix County, Power of 100-Prescott, and area businesses.

#### 40/0

#### Law Enforcement

When a victim-survivor reports the crime to law enforcement, a \$250 fee is charged to the reporting agency for on-going consultation, immediate access to records, and to provide factual and expert testimony.



#### Hospital/Non-Hospital Fees

St. Croix Valley SART contracted with eleven Emergency Department partners in four counties in Western WI: Barron, Polk, Rusk, and St. Croix. SART also contracts with the Goodhue County SMART (Sexual Assault Multi-Disciplinary Action Response Team) to provided services located within the Hope Coalition's Outreach offices in Red Wing, MN.

#### 11%

21%

#### State/Federal Funding

SART's VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funding, which supported the in-house medical advocacy program, ended on September 30, 2024. The Board of Directors approved the transition from in-house advocacy to prevention education, with SART applying for and receiving a one-time funding opportunity from the State of Wisconsin, "WIS ACT 241" to support this program, which was highly successful in the fiscal year.

#### 2%

#### Interest Income

Interest earnings from bank accounts.

## **Foundations & Community Donors**





Fred C. & Katherine B. Andersen Foundation

#### William H. Phipps Foundation





## Weekes Family Foundation















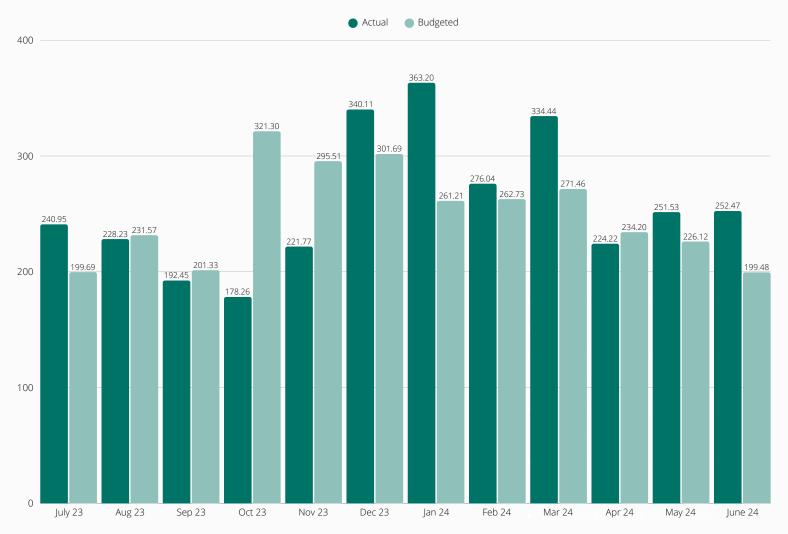


## MEDICAL PARTNERS

- Amery Hospital
- Cumberland HealthCare
- Hudson Hospital
- Marshfield Medical Center
  - Ladysmith
- Marshfield Medical Center
  - Rice Lake
- Mayo Clinic Health System
  - Northland
- Osceola Medical Center
- River Falls Area Hospital
- St. Croix Health
- Western WI Health
- Westfields

## **Finances FY 2024-2025**

#### **BUDGETED VS. ACTUAL**



Diver Falls Area Hospital

- St. Croix Health
- Western WI Health
- Westfields

## Fundraising & Outreach 2024-2025











St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team hosts and attends an array of events throughout the year including:

#### 01.

#### Halloween Gala:

St. Croix Valley SART Hosted its first annual Halloween Gala Fundraiser on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the Rice Lake Elks Club. This fundraiser included Halloween fun, dancing, dinner, silent and live auction items, and had 109 people in attendance.

#### 02.

#### **Golf Scramble:**

Golf Scramble held at Spring Valley Golf Course. Golf fundraiser including silent auction, desert auction, and dinner held to raise funds for St. Croix Valley SART. Approximately 120 people in attendance.

#### 03.

#### Louie's Brat Stand:

Louie's Finer Meats in Cumberland, WI picked St. Croix Valley SART to run their brat stand and help fundraise for our organization.

#### 04.

#### Power of 100:

St. Croix Valley SART was honored to be invited to present in front of the following groups:

- Power of 100 Barron County
- 100 Women Who Care St. Croix County
- Prescott Power of 100

#### **05**.

#### **Green Bay Packer Foundation:**

St. Croix Valley SART was honored to be invited to present at the Green Bay Packer Foundation Banquet Event and received grant funding for our Violence Prevention Education Programing.

#### **Community Events:**

- National Night Out
  - Hudson
  - Turtle Lake
- UWRF Involvement Fair
- River Falls Business Association -Ladies Night
- Run with the Cops UWRF & Special Olympics WI Torch Run
- Hudson Chamber of Commerce
- UWRF Health Society presentation
- Sawyer County SART
- Barron County Sheriff's Department
- Winter Wellness Fair
- Teen Dating Violence Awareness
   Month tabling at local high schools and educating on the signs and resources available
- Townie Thursdays at Lift Bridge
  - February 6<sup>th</sup> & April 10<sup>th</sup> awareness event/ small fundraiser
- Bright Star Care presentation for staff and community members
- Northwoods Tech College Health Fair
- UW Stout Health Fair
- Spring Wellness Event Barron County
- Hudson Pride
- "An Army of Women" co-hosted a showing with Healing Roots Wellness Center









## **Violence Prevention Education Program**







#### Non-physical behaviors that make you feel negative, unsafe or afraid. This can include but its not limited to threats, insults, humilarloos, intimidation, isolation, or staking "EMOTIONAL & VERBAL ABUSE" / CALLING AN INDIVIDUAL NAMES PREVENTING ANOTHER FROM SEEING OR TALKING TO YELLING OR SCREAMING AT ANOTHER A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER

 INTENTIONALLY EMBARRASSING OR
 TELLING AN INDIVIDUAL HOW TO DRESS OR ACT
 SABOTAGING ANOTHER
 SHAMING ANOTHER FOR HIS/HER CHOICES • "THE SILENT TREATMENT"

1 in 3 & 1 in 6

- "SEXUAL ASSAULT" Any unwanted sexual contact. • UNWANTED KISSING, TOUCHING, OR SEXUAL ACTIVITY
- . REFUSING TO USE A CONDOM OR PREVENTING ANOTHER FROM
- . FORCING ANOTHER TO WATCH PORNOGRAPHY UNWELCOMED INDECENT EXPOSURE (AKA "FLASHING")
- INCLUDING VIRTUALLY VIA SNAP, TEXT, DM'S, MESSENGER, ETC.
- HOW TO SUPPORT A FRIEND
- Say "I believe you" Ask: "How can I help you?"
- Address concerns for safety.
- Be supportive and listen patiently. • Help them recognize that the abuse is not "normal" and is NO their fault.
- . Don't be afraid to reach out to a friend who you think needs help

St. Croix Valley SART offers no cost Violence Prevention Education programming and partnership to schools and universities in Barron, Pierce, Polk, & St. Croix counties. Our presentations educate students about the following topics:

- Healthy Relationships and Boundaries
- Defining the forms of violence: emotional, physical, sexual, technology, stalking, etc.
- Consent: How to express or receive a "no", when to ask for consent and what the ask should include.
- Wisconsin State Laws on Consent, Sexting, Child Pornography, etc.
- Myths around sexual violence and dating violence
- How to support a friend who is experience dating violence or sexual violence
- Community resources available to survivors and age appropriate books and media to learn more

We believe this proactive and preventative approach allows students to process and identify the concept and actions of interpersonal violence in a safe learning environment. Preventive education is known to be an important and effective tool in reducing the volume of sexual and interpersonal violence in our local communities.

3,712

**Total Number** of Students Reached

**Total Number** of School **Presentations**  **62** 

**Total Number** of Days Presenting to **Schools** 

**141**.5

**Total Number** of Hours Spent **Presenting** 

16

**Total Number** of Schools

**43%** 

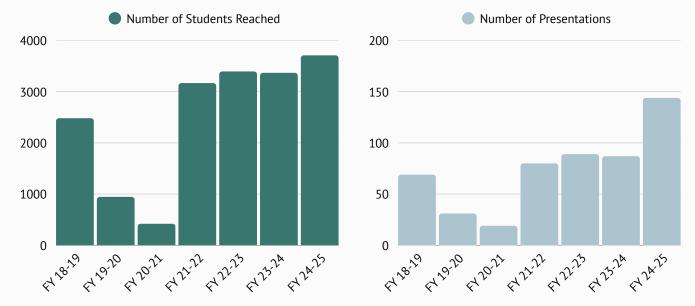
Total percentage of students approached after a presentation with further questions or comments

**7.2%** 

Total percentage of presentations that resulted in a disclosure from a student

**56.6%** 

Total percentage of presentations that had 2+ days of violence prevention education per student



## St. Croix Valley SART had the opportunity to work with the following schools in fiscal year 2024-2025:

#### Colleges:

 University of Wisconsin - River Falls - Health Educators Class & Theta Chi Fraternity - Healthy Relationships & Consent

#### High Schools:

- o Baldwin-Woodville High School 9th Grade Health Classes
- o Cameron High School Softball Team
- Ellsworth High School 9th Grade Healthy Relationships Classes
- Elmwood High School 9th Grade Health Classes
- Hudson High School 10th Grade Health Classes & Peer Helpers Group
- New Richmond High School 9th Grade Health Classes
- Plum City High School All High School Presentation
- Prescott High School 9th Grade Health Classes
- Renaissance Academy All school presentations for grades 9-12
- River Falls High School 9th Grade Health Classes

#### Middle Schools:

- Baldwin-Woodville: Viking Middle School- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Health Classes
- Hudson Middle School 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Health Classes
- $\circ~$  New Richmond Middle School  $6^{th}~\&~7^{th}$  Grade Health Classes and  $8^{th}$  Grade
- o Osceola Middle School 8th Grade
- $\circ$  Plum City High School  $8^{th}$  Grade Health Classes
- Prescott Middle School 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Health Classes
- o River Falls: Meyer Middle School 8th grade Health Classes

## **Conclusion**

We are grateful for another year of providing care and compassion to victims of violence and striving to prevent further violence through our education program. Although we have and continue to struggle with financial support, we greatly appreciate those that have seen and believe in our mission and aid in our sustainability. As an organization, we have a lot to be proud of.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team and the work we do to support victim/survivors of violence.

# Ways to continue your support for St. Croix Valley SART



#### SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP

Please consider becoming a sustaining member. You can select from a monthly or yearly donation that will have a significant impact on the important work provided by St. Croix Valley SART

#### DONATIONS TO ST. CROIX VALLEY SART

Monetary donations can be made via cash, check, or Venmo. For more information or assistance please see our website at **stcroixvalleysart.org** (select donate), email us at infoestcroixvalleysart.org or call: 715–425–6443 and a staff member will be able to assist.



#### **Endowment Fund**

S.A.R.T. has partnered with the St. Croix Valley Foundation, a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization, to accept donations on behalf of S.A.R.T., as well as to invest, manage, grow, and monitor our endowed fund. All donations designated for St. Croix Valley SART's Endowment Fund are fully tax-deductible and can be mailed to St. Croix Valley SART to be deposited on the donor's behalf.

## **Contact Information:**

**Phone:** 715-425-6443 **Address:** 1200 Hosford St. Suite 203,

Hudson, WI, 54016

**Email:** info@stcroixvalleysart.org **Website:** www.stcroixvalleysart.org