



PROCLAMATION

Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2026

WHEREAS, Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is observed each April to raise awareness about sexual assault, harassment, and abuse, and to encourage communities to take action to prevent sexual violence and support survivors. SAAM emerged from the advocacy and leadership of survivors, community organizers, and civil rights leaders, including the establishment of the first rape crisis centers in the 1970s and the passage of landmark legislation, such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1993; and

WHEREAS, April 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a milestone recognizing decades of advocacy, education, and survivor-centered efforts to end sexual violence. This year's theme, "25 Years Stronger: Looking Back, Moving Forward," reflects on both the progress achieved and renews a commitment to prevention, healing, and action, with the voices of survivors remaining at the heart of the movement. SAAM underscores the importance of listening to, believing, and supporting survivors, especially as more survivors come forward to share their stories and call for meaningful, lasting change; and

WHEREAS, in light of the recent statement given by Dolores Huerta, a renowned labor rights leader, community organizer, and civil rights activist, who spoke publicly for the first time about the sexual violence she experienced, declaring that, "I have kept this secret long enough. My silence ends here." We honor her strength and courage with compassion and a firm belief in the truth of her words; and

WHEREAS, in a world where survivors are many times made to feel that their voice must remain silent, where accountability for perpetrators is often elusive, and where survivors are frequently left to carry the burden of the aftermath of the violence and trauma alone, Joliet Township Government affirms its unwavering commitment to believe and stand with survivors, to uphold their right to speak out, and to pursue justice in the ways that are most meaningful to them; and

WHEREAS, sexual violence remains significantly underreported due to fear of retaliation, stigma, trauma, and diminished trust in systems, often resulting in profound and lifelong mental, physical, and emotional impacts on survivors. Data from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center highlights the widespread prevalence of sexual violence, indicating that nearly one in two women in the United States will experience some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime, including one in five who report rape or attempted rape; that at least one in six men experience sexual violence; and that disproportionately high rates affect Indigenous women, individuals with intellectual disabilities, and transgender individuals; and

WHEREAS, as we reflect on the progress made over the past 25 years, we also acknowledge the work that remains, recognizing that sexual violence is not only the result of an individual's choice to cause harm to another but also a reflection of the broader systemic issues in our society that fail to equally value and protect all people, normalize rape culture, and too often prioritize power, dominance, and control over consent, respect,

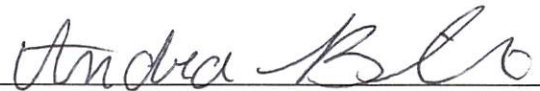
and accountability. Prevention demands that all of us show up: to challenge harm, to practice and uphold enthusiastic consent, and to build communities rooted in care, dignity and respect; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Joliet Township Government Board hereby recognizes April 2026 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and calls upon all members of the community to honor this observance by standing in solidarity with survivors and by following the example of survivors, like Dolores Huerta, who remain steadfast in a commitment to advance rights and equity. As we honor and uplift survivors and recognize the advocates, organizers, and leaders who have driven this movement forward, we reaffirm that their bravery, resilience, and truth-telling make clear that another world is possible, and that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to help create it.

ADOPTED this 14th day of April of 2026.

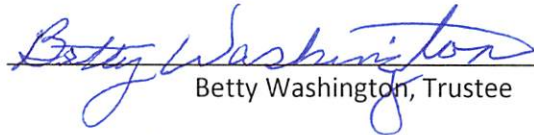


Quinn Adamowski, Trustee



Andrea Bibian, Trustee

Archie Gavin, Trustee



Betty Washington, Trustee



Cesar Guerrero, Township Supervisor

ATTEST:



Kendra Landfair, Township Clerk