

The Freeman Flash

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ELIZABETH FREEMAN CENTER'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

ISSUE XXXV



Join Us this April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month!

Sexual assault and abuse do not happen to “other people.” They happen to us, our friends, our neighbors, our children, our classmates, our coworkers, and our clients. In the US, nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men will experience sexual violence in their lifetimes.

We say no more. No more rape. No more victim blaming. No more shame. Sexual Assault Awareness Month is about joining together to speak out against sexual violence and the attitudes that allow it to continue. Join us:

- **April 2nd: Rally against sexual violence**, Park Square, Pittsfield, 4-6pm
- **April 6th: Pub trivia night fundraiser**, Thistle and Mirth, Pittsfield, 7-9pm
- **April 16th: Sexual Assault Myths and Realities Forum**, Berkshire Community College (BCC), 12:15-1:15pm
- **April 16th: Rally against sexual violence**, City Hall, North Adams, 4-6pm
- **April 19th: Open mic/spoken word event!**, Mission Bar and Tapas, Pittsfield, 6:30-8:30pm
- **April 23rd: Rally against sexual violence**, across from the Mahaiwe, Great Barrington, 4-6pm
- Plus look for these **month-long events** throughout April:
 - **Cup of Prevention campaign at coffee shops** throughout the county, **Speak Up bystander campaign** in local bars, **displays in local libraries** across the county, **events in area schools**, **appearances on TV and radio**, and **daily posts on EFC's Facebook page**.



For more information, contact Denise at our Pittsfield office, (413) 499-2425, or visit us on Facebook.

New Sexual Assault Support Group Starting in Great Barrington

Elizabeth Freeman Center's next sexual assault support group will be starting up in the first week of May, in Great Barrington. For more information, contact counselors 'Ce (pronounced like 'SEA') or Jackie at EFC's Great Barrington office, (413) 429-8190.

It is Not Your Fault, We Believe You, and You Are Not Alone



Pittsfield - 43 Francis Ave.
(413) 499-2425
Gt. Barrington - 401 Stockbridge Rd., Suite 3
(413) 429-8190
North Adams - 85 Main St.
(413) 663-7459
24 hour hotline 1-866-401-2425



Supported locally by: Berkshire United Way • Northern Berkshire United Way • Williamstown Community Chest • City of Pittsfield • Verizon Foundation • The Mary Kay Foundation • Town of Great Barrington • Berkshire Life Charitable Foundation • Coolidge Hill Foundation • Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Funds, including the James and Robert Hardman Fund and The New World Fund • Guardian Life Insurance Company • Many community members, groups, businesses, and towns •

Tax Tips

Earned Income Tax Credit – Is your household income less than \$53,000? Did you have any income last year (even \$1)? Then you may qualify for an Earned Income Tax credit (EITC) of up to \$6,044.

Free tax preparation – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites will do your taxes for free and make sure you get ALL your refund, fast. For household incomes up to \$58,000. With sites in Northern, Central, and South Berkshire County. Call 442-3181 (Pittsfield), 663-3014 (North County), or 418-3685 (South County), or visit www.berkshirehabitat.org/services/vita-tax-program for more information.



International Women's Day Celebration a Blast



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success our International Women's Day celebration on March 8th! Thank you to the hosts (Chin and Sabrina at Flavours of Malaysia), the attendees (you!), the raffle-ticket buyers (you again!), and the donors of our fabulous raffle prizes (all of the finest cultural venues and offerings in the Berkshires) for making it such a wonderful night.

As always, all of the proceeds from the event and raffles raised funds to provide life-saving safety and recovery services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Berkshire County.

Action of the Month: Deplorable Spike in Food Stamp Closings/ Denials in MA



Community organizations throughout Western MA, EFC included, are seeing more and more cases where their clients are denied or are kicked off food stamps (SNAP) despite being eligible, due to changes at the agency that processes food stamp cases (DTA).

Because of these changes, the SNAP participation rate in MA is falling five times faster than the national average. Join anti-hunger advocates leading the charge to address the problem by contacting your State Representatives and Senators today!

EFC Advocate Elisa Fuller Appointed to Pittsfield's Human Rights Commission



We are excited and proud to announce that Mayor Bianchi has appointed Elisa, an EFC RISE advocates for immigrant survivors and a Case Manager at Berkshire Immigrant Center, to the City of Pittsfield's Human Rights Commission!

In her application, Elisa wrote, "As a woman, mother, wife and as an immigrant I know the challenges people face every day....I would like to be able to speak on their behalf to make sure they are heard and to be part of a team whose mission is to assure equal opportunities for all individuals." Congratulations, Commissioner Fuller!

#FillUpYourPlate

Food stamps (SNAP) may soon be facing cuts on the federal level. To fight these possible cuts, Massachusetts Representative Jim McGovern launched the #FillUpYourPlate campaign, collecting messages written on plates from residents across Massachusetts about what SNAP means to them or how hunger has impacted their lives and reading these plates on the House floor. Visit mcgovern.house.gov/FillUpYourPlate to write your plate message!



"I will fight any proposed changes that make it more difficult for the hungry in America to get the food they need. We cannot balance the budget on the backs of poor people."
-Rep. Jim McGovern