

By GUS BILIRAKIS

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention month. We see the heart-wrenching and troubling stories on the news about victims of sexual assault, but it becomes even more disturbing when we realize that it is even happening in our own community.

Sexual assault involves a sexual act that is forced upon a person against his or her will. These acts can be physical, including rape or unwanted touching, as well as verbal or psychological. While women are more likely to experience violence of this type, anyone can be a victim.

As we are forced to realize that such tangible situations are happening, awareness and prevention become all the more critical. On April 30, 2008, the House of Representatives unanimously approved a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention, but as a community, we can also help those we care about to be informed throughout the entire year.

By opening the channels of communication, we can encourage those who have experienced sexual assault to come forward and get the guidance and help they need to ensure appropriate actions are taken against the abuser.