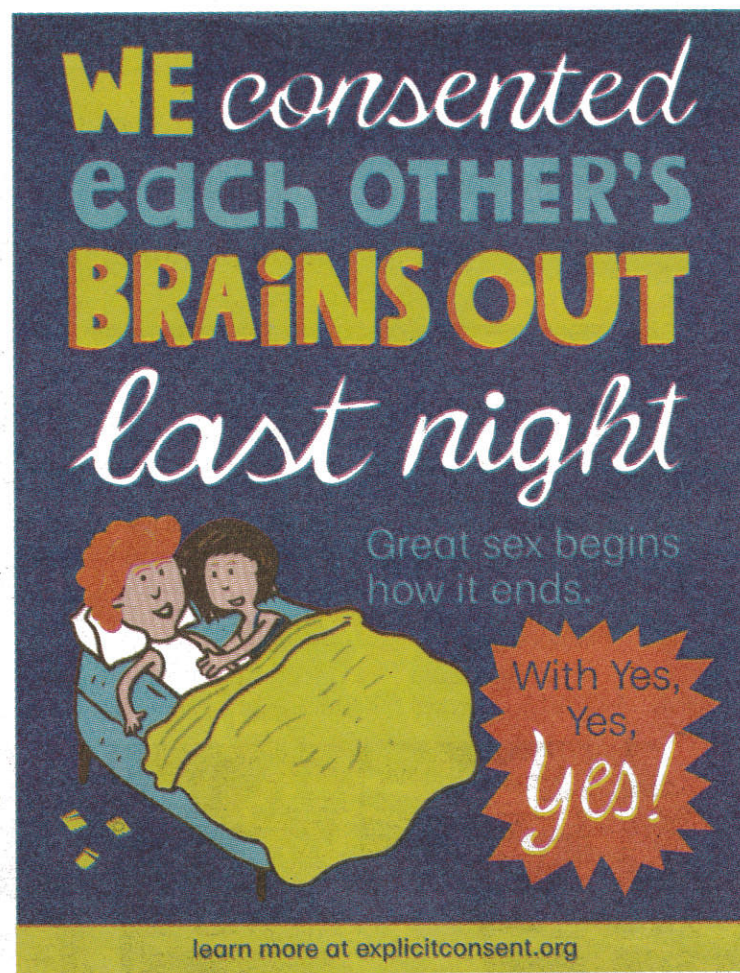


Dating is often fraught, but for Kelly McGuire, things can get complicated especially fast. As the prevention coordinator at Missoula County's Relationship Violence Services, which specializes in sexual violence response and education, and the co-founder of Make Your Move! Missoula, which specializes in sexual violence prevention, she often fields difficult questions about sexual assault and harassment before the bread basket even arrives.

"Earlier this week, I was on a first date with a guy, and when he was asking me about my job, affirmative consent came up," she says. "He said that asking permission takes the fun out of sex — and I had to stop him right there and explain the whole thing to him."

"The whole thing," of course, is the concept of sexual consent and, on a grander scale, McGuire's personal and professional mission to educate everyone in Missoula County about it. She might have taken one step closer to accomplishing it by enlightening her date, even if she lost interest in going out with him again.

Sexual assault and sexual harassment have been on minds nationwide for months, and everyone seems to be talking about it. The #MeToo movement sprang to life in October 2017 after the *New York Times* broke Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein's sexual misconduct scandal, leading to a waterfall of allegations against entertainment and media figures including Kevin Spacey, Charlie Rose, Louis C.K., Garrison Keillor and Al Franken. The allegations also led to millions of women sharing their own stories of sexual violence and harassment on social media. While it's clear from the online



Consent campaign poster courtesy Make Your Move! Missoula

response that the movement has struck a national nerve, and is generating concrete consequences in industries like Hollywood and media, it's less clear if change is afoot locally, beyond those bubbles.

Ask the people on the front lines of sexual violence prevention, intervention and education here in Missoula and they

all say some version of the same thing: Missoula is a bit different from most other places, because Missoula got its wake-up call on the subject of sexual violence six years ago, when the U.S. Department of Justice investigated 350 reported sexual assaults in Missoula and then Jon Krakauer wrote a book — *Missoula: Rape*

and the Justice System in a College Town — about it. Suddenly, due to a few highly publicized sexual assault cases, the many issues surrounding how rape happens, how it is reported and how it is handled by the justice system moved front and center, and organizations from the police department to the city to the university scrambled to make changes.

In some ways, local sexual violence educators agree, that means Missoula is ahead of the curve when it comes to education, outreach and cultural attitudes. In other ways, it means that Missoula has a head start understanding the biggest barriers to progress.

Brenna Merrill, Make Your Move! Missoula's other co-founder, has gotten a good glimpse at how Missoula is different.

"I was at a conference in North Carolina, and no one had read [*Missoula*] or knew our backstory," she says. "People didn't experience it like we did. So, the #MeToo conversation for people here is a little different, because we were forced to start confronting the problem years ago."

In fact, many of the people who are now fighting to prevent sexual violence in Missoula joined the fight directly because of the Missoula rapes and resulting DOJ investigation, a prolonged episode that many of them refer to simply as "2012." McGuire had been involved in Missoula City County Relationship Violence Services since 2010, but when the scandal hit, everyone, including the mayor, the college president and the police chief, suddenly had the interest and increased motive to mount a significant response to the issues of women's safety and sexual assault. Also, thanks in part to the DOJ and the City Council, there were

MARKETING CONSENT



Breaking down the barriers that stand between Missoula and great sex

by Sarah Aswell

suddenly extra funds to make action possible. The result was a sexual assault reporting campaign called "It's Your Call," followed by the formation of Make Your Move! Missoula.

"The earlier campaign was great, but it put the burden of responsibility back on the victims," McGuire explains. "We came out and said, this is great, but we need to prevent sexual assault in the first place. We need to eradicate it."

Eradicating sexual violence — or at least significantly curbing it — involves two big puzzle pieces that seem simple in theory: affirmative sexual consent and bystander intervention. Consent, in particular, is vital to stopping sexual assault in its tracks, while not placing an extra burden on bystanders or potential victims. If *everyone always* received enthusiastic consent from their partners before acting (and if everyone checked to make sure their partner was in a free and clear mindset), incidents of sexual assault would plummet, not to mention the reduction of those troublesome Aziz Ansari-style "bad sex" cases. And although there would likely continue to be a small number of serial sex offenders who don't care about consent, study after study has found that most men who rape don't consider themselves rapists, though they freely admit to engaging in non-consensual sex.

Make Your Move! Missoula is a coalition of Missoula County's Relationship Violence Services, the University of Montana's Student Advocacy Resource Center, the YWCA and the county's Missoula Forum for Children and Youth. While Relationship Violence Services works in the public schools, teaching consent workshops that focus on healthy romantic and sexual relationships to middle schoolers and high schools, MYM rolls out educational campaigns aimed at older teens and adults (the first was about bystander intervention; the second, launching this spring, is about consent). MYM also offers free trainings to bar staff designed to help curb sexual violence and harassment downtown.

At the college level, the Student Advocacy Resource Center, directed by Drew Colling, is tasked with educating the university population about sexual assault and sexual violence, in addition to extensive counseling, academic advocacy, Title IX advocacy and 24/7 crisis response. Like MYM, SARC gained the resources and manpower to expand its program as a result of the events of 2012 — this time from the university. UM freshman currently attend a mandatory one-hour presentation about bystander intervention and consent, take an online sexual assault prevention course called Personal Em-

"There's a part of consent that analyzes your place in the world and your partner's place in the world before you can say yes or no in authentic ways."

powerment Through Self Awareness (PETA), and take an online refresher course called Haven Plus as juniors.

Even with educators offering free resources at seemingly every turn, the push for prevention faces significant barriers. The first, and perhaps trickiest, is that consent education is more complicated than it looks, and misconceptions run deep, even among those who think they get it. Merrill and McGuire lament that explicit verbal consent is often perceived

I'm older or more experienced, or if I have other sorts of social power, then consent is going to require conversation. There's a part of consent that analyzes your place in the world and your partner's place in the world before you can say yes or no in authentic ways."

Educators also battle gender stereotypes and gendered expectations in the bedroom, from the social pressure that men feel to be sexually active and pursue women aggressively to the constant cul-

Finally, McGuire says, the contemporary consent conversation is too focused on the question of legality (as in the case of the Aziz Ansari story) instead of the question of respecting boundaries and taking care of your partner's wants and needs.

"We need to understand the difference between legal consent and ethical consent," she says. "These aren't terms I've encountered, but I use them to explain the difference between Montana's consent statute and what it looks like



Make Your Move! Missoula co-founders Brenna Merrill, left, and Kelly McGuire.

as unsexy and overly formal (it's not, they add), and a 2016 study in the *Journal of Sex Research* showed that participants still considered "not saying no" the biggest cue that a person is consenting to sex, when, in fact, freezing up and "not saying no" — known as tonic immobility — is an extremely common response to sexual assault. At the same time, Merrill says, there's a lack of understanding about situations in which partners may not have the ability to say no. Such situations go far beyond incapacitation with drugs or alcohol.

"Consent is more than just making sure you get a yes," she explains. "It involves understanding power dynamics. If

tural signaling to women that femininity is passive and pleasing and pleasant (without, of course, overt sexuality). Prevention educators are fighting literally hundreds of daily messages that support gendered sexual expectations.

"I'm always looking for clips from popular culture to show kids that depict portrayals of consent," says McGuire, "but there basically aren't any! In movies and on TV, people read each other's minds, and it's assumed the people want to kiss or have sex without asking. We don't have a culture where we understand that we all want to be asked before someone does something to us, even though it would benefit both men and women."

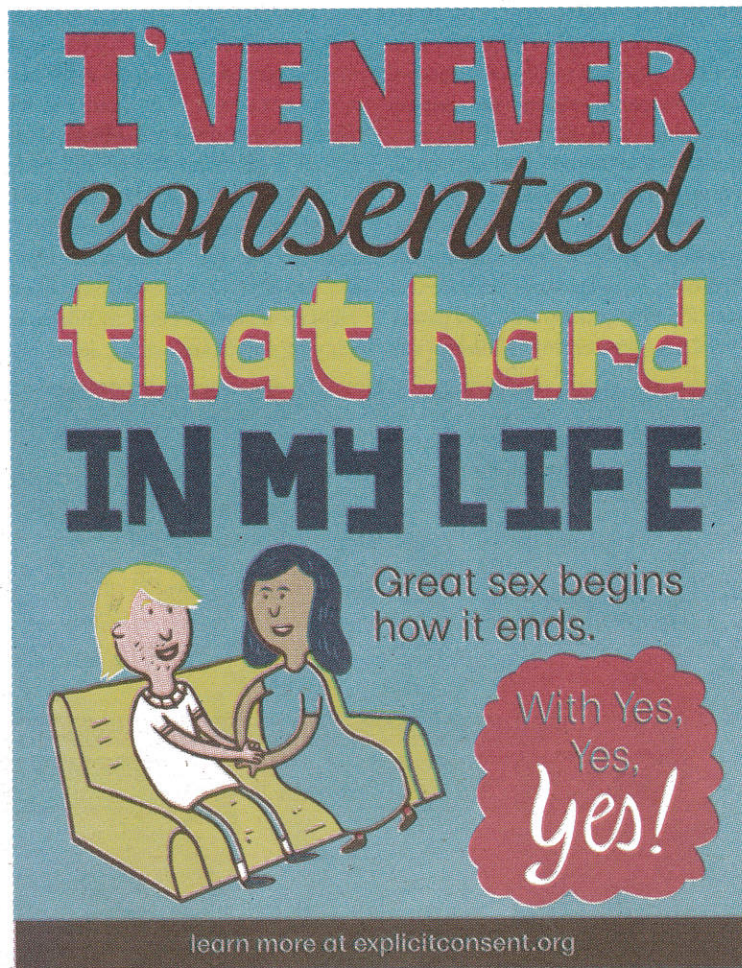
when someone tries to pressure someone else into sex — the issue of agreeing without wanting. I don't want to teach kids the bare legal minimum of consent, because that's not good enough."

The next barrier to prevention education is interest: Many people simply don't know that they lack knowledge when it comes to sexual violence prevention, bystander intervention and consent. And, McGuire adds, men especially may be resistant to learning if they feel blamed, targeted or defensive about their own past actions. Even when individuals or organizations know sexual violence is a problem, acting on that knowledge can be difficult.

"A Make Your Move! Missoula survey found that 84 percent of respondents in Missoula had encountered sexual harassment or had a physical altercation in bars in the last year."

"The best folks may be saying, 'Hey, this #MeToo thing is happening and I want to make a change,'" Merrill says. "But I don't think most people know what resources are available or how to ask for them. Talking about sexual violence can be draining, and thinking about it and processing it can be hard without help. In a less kind light, I think that some people can feel silenced, or like it's just a women's issue, or that it's happening in Hollywood and not affecting you or your employees or your business."

A good example of organizations acknowledging the problem but failing to take action is the response to Make Your Move's bar workshops, which offer free, ongoing sexual violence prevention training and support to bar staff around Missoula. The program launched last spring, after a MYM survey found that 84 percent of respondents in Missoula had encountered sexual harassment or had a physical altercation in bars in the last year, while more than 60 percent had experienced either unwanted sexual comments or unwanted sexual touch. Only two local bars (the VFW and the Rhino) have completed the training, and the Sunrise Saloon is scheduled for training next month. The Badlander complex trained its staff under an older program in 2013.



Consent campaign poster courtesy Make Your Move! Missoula

Tanner Court, canteen operations manager at the VFW, immediately saw the trainings as necessary, even though it meant paying his staff for the extra time.

"Since we run a music venue and bar, it's important to create a place where people can feel safe and invited, regardless of how they look, a safe space where they can be themselves and not worry about negative outside distractions," he says.

Court says that he personally feels more comfortable being trained to respond appropriately in the case of a sexual harassment incident, and hopes that patrons who see the Make Your Move! sticker on the VFW's front door know that they are in a place where the bartenders and security are trained to intervene.

Why haven't more Missoula bars signed up for the training?

"Honestly, besides paying the staff for training, the other reason to not do it might be fear of the fact that they haven't been doing it," Court says. "They feel the status quo is fine and don't want to make the effort to make a change. Some of the bars may be scared about learning what they are supposed to do — that they would know about the higher standard and have to be held accountable."

It's also difficult to reach non-students. High school and college programs ensure that sexual violence prevention educators have a captive audience, but older adults can move through the world ignorant of changing viewpoints, evolving culture and myths about sexual harassment, sexual assault and consent. In many cases, Merrill says, people in their late 30s and older lack the vocabulary to talk about issues like "enthusiastic consent" and "gender expression." MYM focuses on the 16-34 demographic, and tries to reach non-students not only through the bar work-

shops, but also via media campaigns that include posters, videos, radio ads, social media posts and an Instagram book club.

The #MeToo movement has reached Missoula not just in conversations about sexual assault and the judicial system, but also in increased awareness of workplace harassment and bad sex, in which one person feels violated, dehumanized or simply unheard.

"One positive of this mainstream event" — #MeToo — "is that we're starting new conversations," Merrill says. "When we just focus on rape prevention and response to rape, we're only focusing on one sliver of sexual violence. Understanding that sexual harassment and 'bad sex' are violations, even if they aren't rape, is an important thing. It gives language to people's experiences, and reminds us that we have to respond to all acts of sexual violence and dehumanization."

At SARC, Colling is already seeing an impact from the #MeToo movement among students.

"One of the biggest challenges is that students are coming to college, and many of the concepts we cover, like consent, are totally new to them," she says. "They can be 18 before I get a chance to talk with them. But with the #MeToo movement, I can already feel a shift, when we are in classrooms and during our trainings. Not only have they heard about this, but they want to be educated, and they know it's important."

The final barrier to prevention education is, not surprisingly, money. MYM has been funded by the city, the county, United Way and, until recently, a grant from Raliance, a national collaborative funded by the NFL that aims to end sexual violence within the span of a single generation. The \$50,000, one-year Raliance

Your Affirmative Sexual Consent Cheat Sheet

Sexual consent does not just mean explicitly asking new partners for permission before intercourse. There's a bit more to it than that. Here's what Make Your Move! Missoula wants you to know.

• **A consenting partner has to have a free and clear mindset.** Before anything happens, confirm that your partner is feeling no pressure from you or anyone else. They must be sober and conscious. There must also not be a significant undiscussed power differential between you and your partner that might affect one partner's ability to say no.

• **Your partner can say no at any time, even in the middle of sexual activity.** Nope, you don't get to sexually assault someone based on a technicality like, "But you wanted to a minute ago." Also, the fact that you engaged in sexual activity with your partner in the past does not equal current consent.

• **Verbal consent is best.** Body language can be a helpful indicator, but nothing is clearer than a firm "yes," especially if you are with a new partner. Asking for consent doesn't have to be formal or clinical — it can be as easy as asking what your partner would like. You can even use dirty words!

• **Lack of protest or resistance is not consent.** Freezing up is a common response to being in an uncomfortable sexual situation, which is why waiting to hear "no" is such a poor way of approaching consent.

• **Consent isn't just for new partners.** Practice enthusiastic, affirmative consent every time you try a new activity, or any time you aren't sure if your partner is feeling it in the moment. Even people who have been partnered for many years can benefit from consent.

• **Consent is a process.** Think about consent as an ongoing conversation that can span from, "Do you want to try this new thing I've been thinking about?" to, "Since we work together and I've been promoted to manager, we should probably chat..."

• **Be respectful about rejection.** Rejection happens, and you should know how to accept it without pushing back or acting hurt. Try lines like, "I'm glad you said something," or, "No worries, I want you to be comfortable," or "That's OK, I'm happy just being with you."

• **Here's a list of some things that do not count as consent:** dressing in revealing clothing, drinking alcohol, flirting, going home with you, going into your bedroom, getting naked.

grant ran out in May 2017, and since then, MYM has been funded by a patchwork of city, county and other grant money. The county's relationship violence services manager Shantelle Gaynor and McGuire are currently applying for grants, but McGuire says that if money can't be found by the end of the fiscal year, Brenna Merrill's position will probably be cut.

Statewide budget cuts also affect local resources. The Montana Human Right Bureau, based in Helena, was dealt a \$135,000 budget cut in January that makes traveling for investigations and trainings impossible. The bureau can now no longer offer free workplace sexual harassment trainings in Missoula, cutting a line of prevention to the non-student population. McGuire and Merrill say MYM would like to take over those trainings, but whether it can depends on finding the money to fund it.

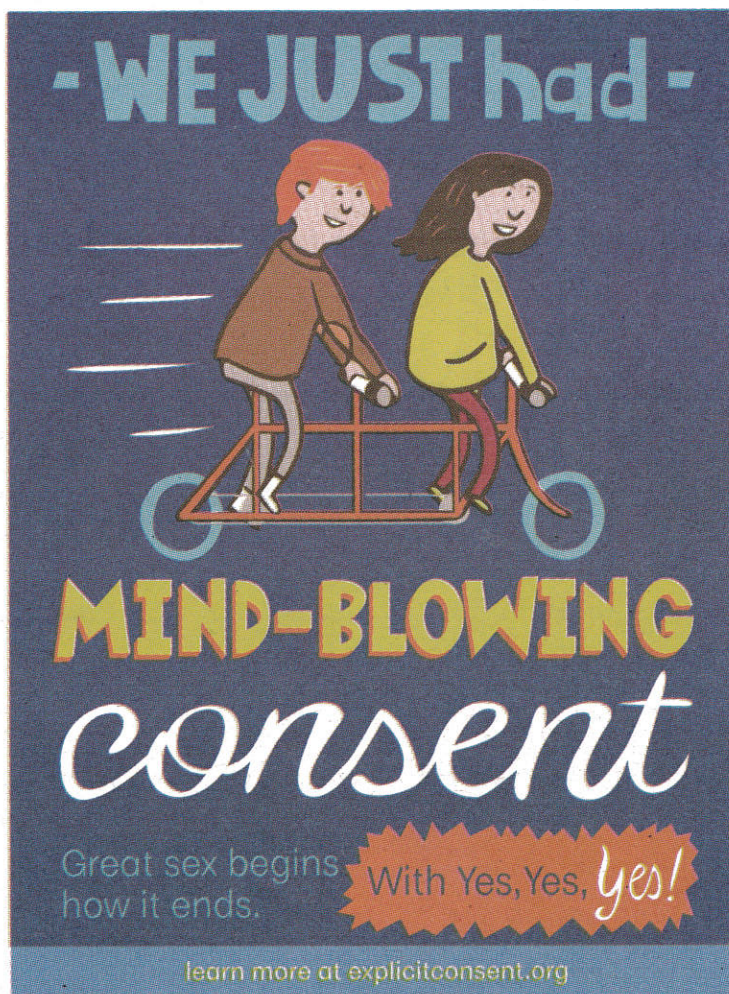
The research end of sexual violence prevention in Missoula also requires significant funding. In 2012, the Department of Justice required, and largely funded, a campus-wide climate survey that measured student attitudes and experiences regarding sexual assault, their awareness levels regarding sex-based discrimination and their experience with campus and community resources. Created, administered and analyzed by psychology professors including Christine Fiore (University

of Montana) and Alison Pepper (Missoula College), among others, the survey was taken by thousands of students over the fall of 2013, 2014 and 2015. The results, which are still being analyzed, not only help track the success of the education programs, but also add insight into what prevention programs like SARC and MYM focus on during educational and training sessions, down to small details.

For example, Pepper says that based on data collected by the survey regarding sexual assault myths (such as "she was asking for it" and "he didn't mean to"), SARC has been able to make specific changes to its curriculum to make it more effective and relevant.

The climate surveys stopped after 2015 when DOJ funding ceased, and although Fiore and Pepper would like to continue the research, the funding isn't there. While much of their personal labor is already unpaid and university service-based, the survey is large, computer-based, and involves purchasing gifts or prizes for students who agree to participate. While SARC funding seems safe — the center was recently ranked Priority 1 in the university's program prioritization process, positioning it for development and growth — it will suffer from a lack of formal feedback from the student body.

Despite these stumbling blocks, Pepper says there's reason to feel positive.



Consent campaign poster courtesy Make Your Move! Missoula

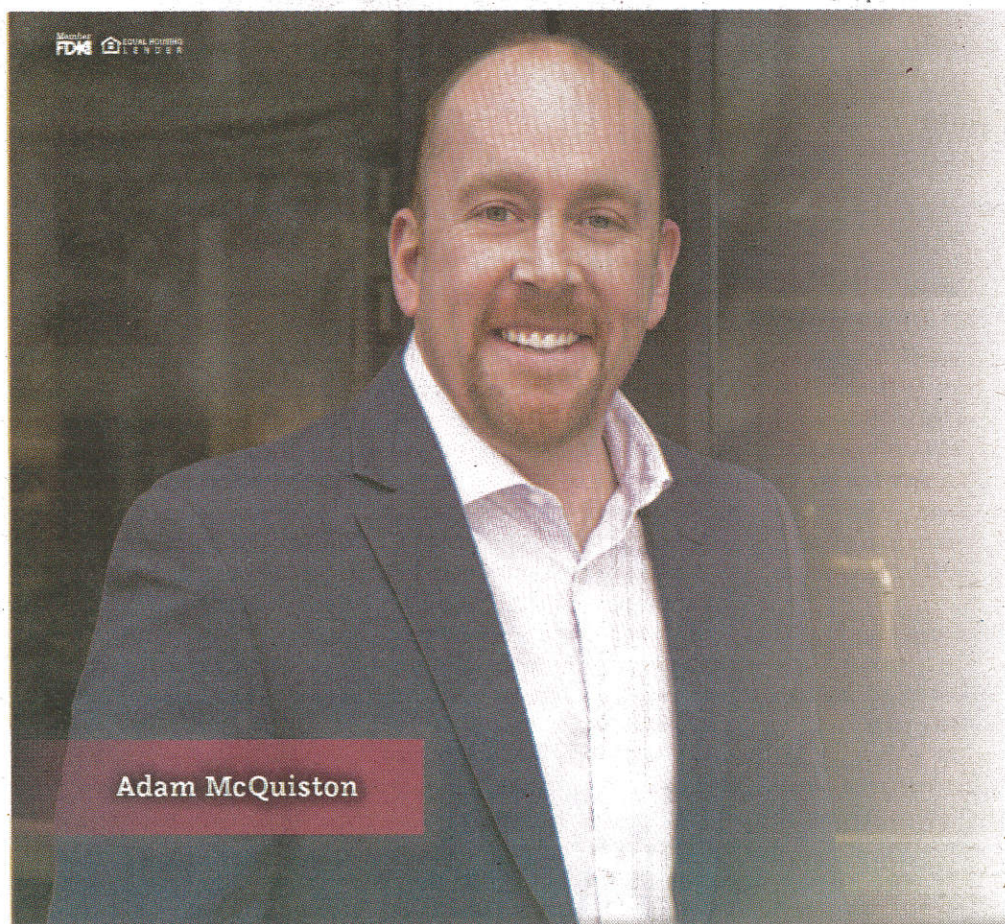
The campus climate surveys already conducted show a trend toward increased awareness regarding multiple common rape myths. And even though the #MeToo movement may be short on concrete steps toward change, it does have people talking about topics that used to be taboo. And as McGuire knows, cultural change ultimately does come down to individuals.

"Getting yourself educated is the most important thing you can do," she says. "Reflect on times in your life when you've seen sexual harassment and didn't intervene because you didn't know what to do. Read everything that is being written about sexual assault and consent right now. Teach your kids about consent and bodily autonomy. And believe survivors."

She ends with a refrain that everyone working in sexual violence prevention circles back to again and again: Integrating affirmative consent into your own life, right now, is something you can do to create change. And it won't ruin your sex life.

"The thing I want people to understand most is that consent is linked to great sex," she says. "Consent goes hand in hand with better communication and healthier relationships and sex positivity. The goal isn't less sex. It's better sex for everybody." f

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