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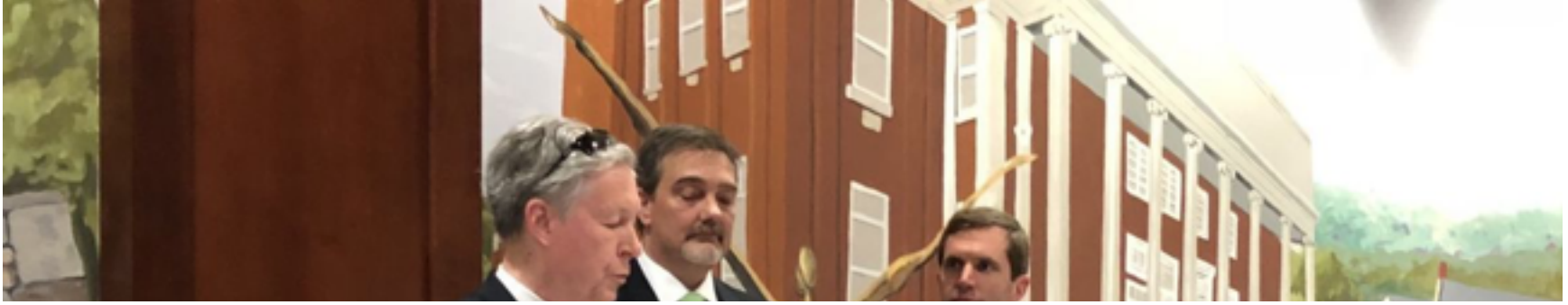
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http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/attorney-general-joins-wku-sexual-assault-prevention-efforts/article_a1c7e6b6-41f4-5beb-8792-67670fc227d2.html

Attorney general joins WKU sexual assault prevention efforts

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Mar 27, 2018



Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear urged Western Kentucky University students Monday to “stand up and step in” when they encounter sexual assault situations on their campus.

“This is your community,” he said, speaking at WKU’s Downing Student Union. “We need you to stand united and to say that sexual assault that happens on campus is unacceptable.”

Beshear stood with Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College President Phillip Neal and WKU Provost David Lee in proclaiming April as Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

Several events are planned across both campuses, including SKYCTC’s own kickoff event at 11 a.m. April 3 in Building F at its Bowling Green campus.

“We try to create a culture of caring,” Neal told the Daily News. “Ultimately, we’d like to see the disappearance of sexual violence in our society, but I think that happens through education and awareness first.”

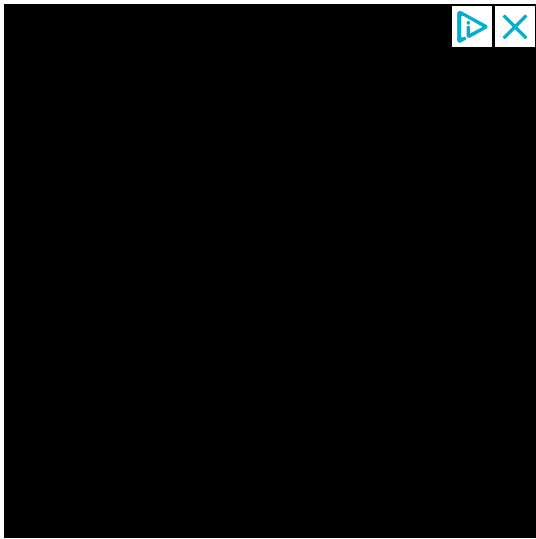
Other upcoming events at WKU include a visit April 9 from three Indianapolis Star reporters who first exposed widespread child sex abuse by former USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar. The visit, which is part of the annual Gaines Lecture Series, will be at 7 p.m. in the Jody Richards Hall auditorium.

A full list of sexual assault prevention and awareness events is available at www.wku.edu/heretohelp/sapm.

For Beshear, the culture is on the brink of a massive transformation when it comes to confronting sexual assault and harassment, but much more still needs to be done. Part of that includes his office's efforts to test a backlog of 3,100 rape kits in Kentucky.

"There is no reason, no legitimate reason, that each and every one of those kits shouldn't have been tested," he said, adding that all of the kits have since undergone initial testing.

Beshear said all universities should take note of Nassar's abuse of dozens of young girls.



"The administration had enough knowledge to know that it was happening," he said, urging officials to take complaints seriously. "When we do it well, we should be commended, but when we do it wrong, we have to be corrected. It's one of those areas where we have to strive to be perfect every single time."

Beshear also criticized U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' decision to withdraw Obama-era guidance on campus sexual assault, although he didn't identify her by name. DeVos had expressed concerns that the existing guidance for complying with federal anti-sex discrimination laws was a disservice to victims and the accused alike.

"Bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., are trying to strip back absolutely necessary protections in Title IX," he said.

In an interview, Beshear said he was referring to DeVos' policy decision.

“I strongly oppose Betsy DeVos' moves to scale back Title IX guidance that provided more protection to victims,” he said. “When one in five college women are being sexually assaulted on a campus, we need more protections, not less.”

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