

CHART

Our commitment to building a healthier community

CHART is an expression of Methodist's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the communities in which we live, work and play.

In 2009, the Methodist Hospital Heidi Wilke SANE/SART — *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Sexual Assault Response Team* — Survivor Program **treated more than 130 sexual assault survivors** from the Omaha area, with the majority being women under the age of 25.



Valerie, RN
emergency department
nurse and member of
the Methodist Hospital
Heidi Wilke SANE/SART
Survivor Program applying
a patient's wristband

A unique collaboration addressing the needs of a harsh reality.



We might like to imagine that sexual assaults happen only in other parts of the nation, not in the communities where we live and work. The harsh reality, according to the State Attorney General's office, is that one of every eight women in Nebraska will be sexually assaulted over the course of her lifetime. Men, too, are victims of sexual assault.

How well prepared is our community to care for the survivors? In Omaha, we have a strong model in place, a collaboration that unites Methodist Hospital with government and community agencies. The Methodist Hospital Heidi Wilke SANE/SART Survivor Program described in this report meets a real need in a caring, comprehensive and individualized way.

This program, the only one of its kind in the Omaha Metro area, was instituted in 2003. Prior to that, emergency room care after a sexual assault was far too similar to emergency room care after an accident or injury. It took the insight and advocacy of Heidi Wilke, a sexual assault survivor, to help us identify the missing privacy and comfort care elements and speed development of our SANE/SART program, complete with follow-up care and community outreach.

Provided as a benefit to the community, this program is a necessary and natural extension of Methodist Health System's commitment to care for people, particularly to improving women's health.

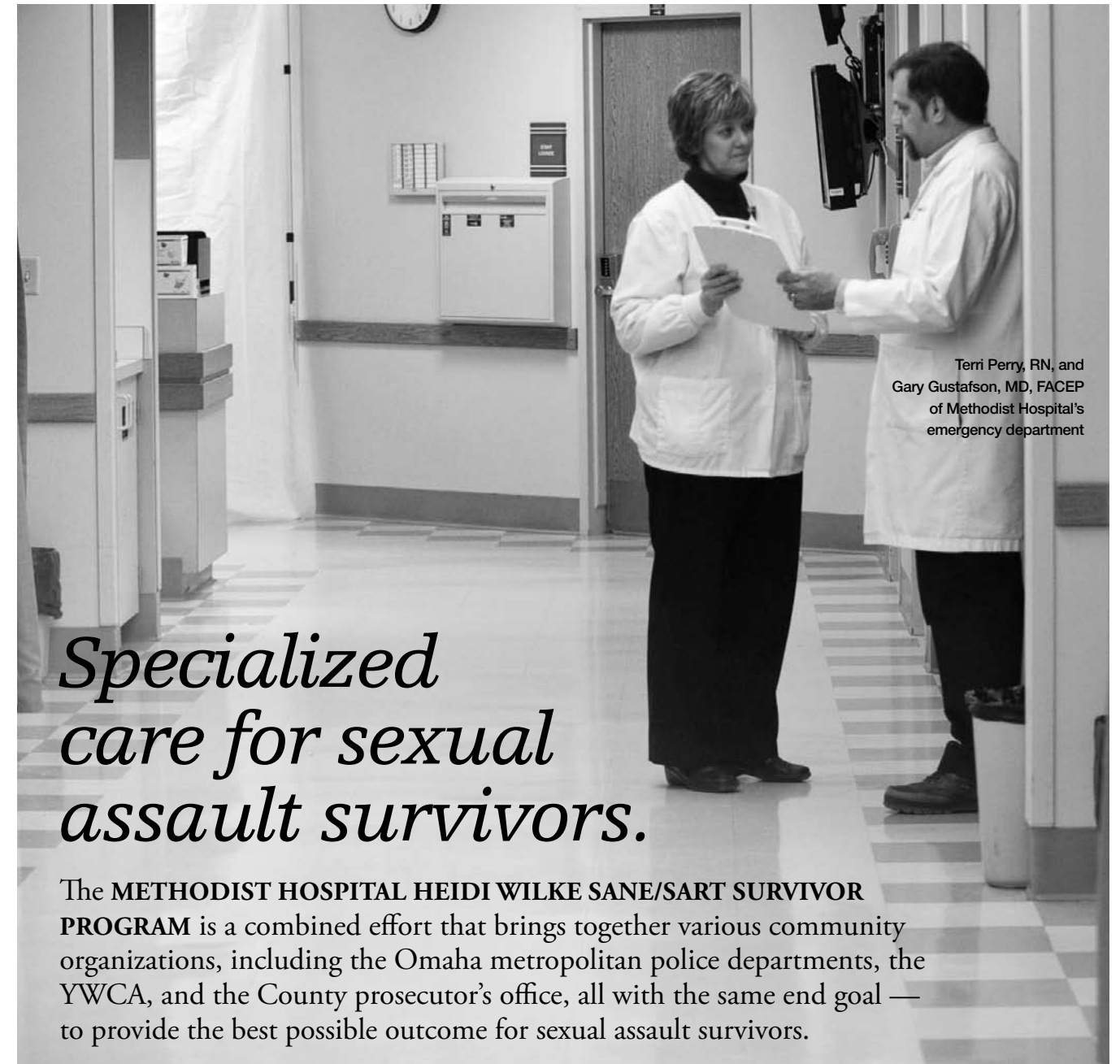
Through the SANE/SART program, we offer immediate, compassionate emergency care from health care professionals specifically trained not just to meet a survivor's special medical and emotional needs, but trained also in proper methods of recognizing and collecting forensic evidence. Dedicated SANE nurses, available 24/7, are key members of the team that cares for survivors. Their neutral evidence collection and testimony can aid authorities in any criminal investigation.

SANE/SART care is offered in a uniquely private emergency room setting at Methodist Hospital's 84th Street campus. In June 2010, when the Methodist Women's Hospital opens at 192nd and W. Dodge Road, the complete program, with a private emergency room area, will be available there as well to meet the needs of our growing community.

For survivors and their loved ones, as well as all those involved with the Heidi Wilke SANE/SART Survivor Program, this difficult topic is part of the fabric of their daily lives. While we wish no other members of our community would experience sexual assault, we are ready to help if and when they do.

To learn more about the services Methodist Health System provides as a benefit to our community, visit www.methodistchart.com.

John M. Fraser
President and CEO
Methodist Health System



Terri Perry, RN, and Gary Gustafson, MD, FACEP of Methodist Hospital's emergency department

Specialized care for sexual assault survivors.

The **METHODIST HOSPITAL HEIDI WILKE SANE/SART SURVIVOR PROGRAM** is a combined effort that brings together various community organizations, including the Omaha metropolitan police departments, the YWCA, and the County prosecutor's office, all with the same end goal — to provide the best possible outcome for sexual assault survivors.

This is the story of an ordinary young woman, working her way through college en route to a career in health care. She is determined to have a career helping people ... to make a difference.

While many of her peers share a similar determination, her source of motivation is most unique. Making a difference is important to her because she is a sexual assault survivor. She and her family credit the Methodist Hospital Heidi Wilke SANE/SART Survivor Program for making a difference in her life at a time when she needed it the most.

The young woman was taken to Methodist Hospital the night

she was brutally raped. Upon her arrival at Methodist, she was treated with care and dignity by specially trained nurses who saw to her physical and emotional needs. Little things — like a waiting room secluded from others waiting to be seen in the emergency department, a hot shower and fresh clothes to wear home — all helped to begin her recovery process.

She tells family and friends that the care she received was overwhelming. From the moment it happened until several weeks afterward, she calls her care "tremendous." She is grateful to the police, doctors, nurses, advocates and many people she never met for helping her get through a difficult time.

The SANE/SART unit exists to help provide treatment to survivors for:

- Identification and care of injuries
- Evidence collection
- Preventive treatment for some sexually transmitted diseases
- Emergency pregnancy prevention
- Emotional support
- Counseling and crisis care referral
- Health care follow-up, recommendations and referral



Nurses who work with survivors of rape and sexual assault know that the hours after a sexual assault can be as traumatizing as the act itself. How a survivor of sexual assault is treated immediately following the incident can tremendously affect the survivor's recovery.

Origins of the Program

Heidi Wilke did not have access to such a program when she was kidnapped, robbed and raped on January 30, 2002, following a meeting in downtown Omaha. Wilke regularly shares her experiences of that day ... of undergoing a



Heidi Wilke helped develop the SANE/SART Survivor Program at Methodist Hospital

very personal medical examination behind the limited privacy of an emergency room curtain; of having to don hospital scrubs for the trip home because her clothing had been taken by police as evidence, including her shoes; of yearning for the moment she could step into the shower to wash away the trauma of the day. However, it was

through this experience that Wilke and her husband, Jeff, were inspired to help the many who would follow.

Acting on a suggestion by the prosecutor in Heidi's case, the Wilkes began to work on developing a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) program in Omaha. At the time, the nearest

program was 50 miles away in Lincoln, Neb. To the Wilkes, it was clear the SANE/SART program for survivors was a natural fit for Methodist, a hospital committed to women's health care.

On June 2, 2003, The Heidi Wilke SANE/SART Survivor Program was officially dedicated at Methodist Hospital. Since that time, more than 700 sexual assault survivors have been treated through the program. The program provides coordinated, comprehensive and compassionate care to survivors of sexual assault. In its first year, the number of women who came to Methodist for treatment of sexual assault doubled — supporting the need for a program of this kind in the community.

The SANE Nurses' Critical Role

The importance of SANE training is vital to treating a patient's medical and emotional needs, as well as for preserving the integrity of evidence for law enforcement.

"The SART approach to treating survivors of sexual assault is a tremendous resource for our community," said the program's clinical coordinator, Jackie Thielen, MSN, APRN. "In addition to providing health care to survivors, SANE nurses collect forensic evidence, such as DNA, to assist law enforcement with its criminal investigation." Thielen emphasized that while SANE nurses are sometimes called to testify in sexual assault cases, their role in the legal proceedings is strictly to collect evidence and maintain its integrity. Currently, Methodist Hospital has 14 SANE nurses, who rotate to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to assist survivors of sexual assault. Exams following an assault

can last up to four hours, in addition to the police interview. SANE nurses are there for as long as they are needed.

"Survivors leave feeling a personal touch because our nurses are committed to being there," said Terri Perry, RN, BSN, a SANE nurse who has been involved with the program since its inception. "Our SANE nurses have a passion to be involved. These are moms with full-time jobs, who miss soccer games and holidays to be there for survivors."

To ensure that the community did not run short of SANE/SART trained staff, Nebraska Methodist College – The Josie Harper Campus offered a 40-hour SANE/SART training course last October. Forty-six nurses, pastoral care personnel, law enforcement, advocates and other professionals from Nebraska and Iowa took part in this intensive, hands-on training.

Protecting the Privacy and Dignity of Survivors

Sally Jochens, a volunteer from the Center Against Sexual and Domestic Abuse, Inc. (CASDA) and a SANE nurse, explained the importance of having SANE nurses and staff in the Omaha community: "Survivors benefit from having a neutral person who will not only take them through the exam and collect evidence, but who will also address the serious emotional and health issues a sexual assault survivor faces."

In addition, the privacy and emotional support offered by Methodist's SANE/SART program is important to help survivors from being re-traumatized by having to wait for

long periods in a crowded ER waiting area. SANE/SART has helped cut in half the average emergency department wait time for sexual assault survivors.

Methodist provides a private waiting area and a secluded exam room where survivors are assessed by a SANE nurse. It is in this exam room, furnished with state-of-the-art equipment, where evidence collection and documentation takes place. The unit also features a private bathroom and shower for survivors to use after the exam, as well as clothing to wear home, provided by the Assistance League of Omaha.

The SANE/SART unit also offers a private location for women to be interviewed by police officers and to meet with a YWCA victim advocate. The advocate helps survivors find counseling and support groups, as well as guiding them through legal proceedings.

According to Thielen, ongoing follow-up care after a sexual assault is critical to the recovery process. When they leave Methodist, survivors are given a suggested discharge plan for six months of follow-up treatment. A case manager also calls survivors within 24 to 48 hours to see if they have questions and to provide referrals for follow-up care.

Patients without a regular physician, or those who cannot afford follow-up visits, are often referred to the Methodist Hospital Renaissance Health Clinic, which offers low-cost health care from certified nurse practitioners on a sliding-fee scale.



“It has helped to increase conviction rates for sexual assault in our community, and it's been a great collaborative approach to dealing with sexual assault.”
 Lt. Kathy Gonzalez
 Omaha Police Department, Special Victims Unit

Omaha's SART team includes:

- **Joseph T. McCaslin, MD**, director of Methodist Hospital's emergency department; the medical director for the SANE/SART program.
- **Robert Penn, MD**, the program's infectious disease specialist, addressing the health issues faced by survivors.
- **SANE nurses** (on call 24/7) — registered nurses who have undergone special education and training in the examination and care of sexual assault victims, as well as in the collection and custody of evidence.
- **YWCA advocates** who lend support in the emergency department, help survivors navigate the legal system and locate services, resources, counseling and a safe place to stay. **The Center Against Sexual & Domestic Abuse, Inc. (CASDA)** provides similar support to survivors in Sarpy county.
- **Members of the Special Victims Unit of the Omaha Police Department.**
- **Members of the City/County Prosecutor's Office.**
- **Methodist Hospital** physicians, nurses, pastoral care, infection control staff, laboratory personnel, patient education department and other health care professionals.
- **All Methodist Hospital emergency department personnel.**



Omaha Police Department

A Collaborative Community Effort

Lt. Kathy Gonzalez, with the Omaha Police Department's Special Victims Unit, has been involved with Methodist's SANE/SART program for the past three years. According to Gonzalez, the department refers sexual assault survivors to Methodist for treatment "because of their skill and training not only in treating the survivor's medical needs, but also for the proper collection of evidence, which is so crucial to the investigation of a case."

"We rely on the expertise of the physicians, nurses and staff of Methodist's SANE/SART program," said Gonzalez. "It has helped to increase conviction rates for sexual assault in our community, and it's been a great collaborative approach to dealing with sexual assault."

Gonzalez acknowledged that the SANE/SART program has helped bring the various organizations together to form a close-knit team. "With just a phone call or an e-mail, I know that I can get assistance on a sexual assault case," she said. "Information gathered by each individual agency is shared to help ensure that survivors receive all the services they need. And hopefully, we are able to get the information and evidence we need to make an arrest and see that justice is served."

County Attorney Stephanie Shearer, who was working with the office when Heidi Wilke's case was prosecuted, emphasized that the SANE/SART program has also greatly improved the consistency and quality of the evidence that is collected in sexual assault cases.

"The training they have received, not only on how to collect, but how to preserve the evidence, is a great advantage for our office and for the police department," Shearer said. "Collecting DNA and documenting related injuries are all effective aids in the prosecution. The better that's done in the initial stage, in this case during the examination, the more likely we'll have a better outcome during the criminal prosecution."

"I don't really think that I could estimate the value that [the SANE/SART program] brings to survivors," Shearer said. "I have dealt with numerous sexual assault survivors who have been treated at Methodist, and they have nothing but glowing things to say about the care they've received. The fact that they have a place of privacy before and during the medical exam and to meet with an advocate and law enforcement ... the benefit that brings to the patient, to deal with such a traumatic experience, is invaluable."

Education and Prevention

One of the important tasks of Methodist's SANE/SART program is to help increase community awareness about the reality of sexual assault in the community, as well as the resources available to assist survivors once they leave Methodist.

"One of the benefits of having this program at Methodist is that its very presence helps bring awareness in the community about sexual assault — letting people know that it does happen here — and that when it does, the SANE/SART program is here to help," Heidi Wilke said.

Each year, the SANE/SART team members also conduct presentations on sexual assault at area high schools, colleges, businesses and community groups.

Thielen and Perry also collaborated with the YWCA in 2009 to train and educate University of Nebraska at Omaha campus security officers on the subject of dating violence. The pair also offers training to YWCA hotline volunteers, providing information about the rape exam and SANE/SART services so volunteers will have a better understanding of what survivors will experience during the medical examination. Thielen also serves on the public policy board of the YWCA, keeping a watch on legislative issues concerning sexual assault.

Meeting a Present and Future Community Need

Within the walls of Methodist's SANE/SART unit, survivors age 13 and older have access to care, regardless of their ability



Teresa
YWCA advocate

YWCA advocates lend support in the emergency department, help survivors find counseling and support groups, and guide them through legal proceedings.

to pay. According to Thielen, 40 percent of patients treated through the Methodist SANE/SART program since 2007 had no health insurance to cover medical and preventive care related to sexual assault.

Furthermore, many insurance plans and Medicare often do not completely cover all of the expenses associated with treatment for sexual assault. And many survivors cannot afford the out-of-pocket medical costs, especially when it comes to receiving the follow-up care that is critical to their recovery.

To ensure that compassionate care will always be available to sexual assault survivors, Heidi and Jeff Wilke continue to work closely with the Methodist Hospital Foundation to spearhead fundraising efforts to endow the program permanently. This endowment will help to cover any shortfalls and provide charitable assistance to patients who are unable to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

"We feel that the SANE/SART program plays a critical role in helping transform sexual assault victims into survivors," said Cynthia Peacock, president and CEO of Methodist Hospital Foundation. "We just knew that it was important to support a program that provides coordinated, comprehensive, and also fantastic care for every survivor of sexual assault, regardless of age, race or gender."

The Foundation has also announced that it has raised the approximately \$43,000 needed to fully equip a Heidi Wilke SANE/SART Survivor Program room at the Methodist Women's Hospital when it opens in June at 192nd and W. Dodge Road. The program at the new hospital will include a private consultation room, a bathroom and an exam room located away from the main traffic area of the emergency department. **C**



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According to the Nebraska Crime Commission, there were 583 reported cases of first-degree sexual assault in the state of Nebraska in 2008, **180 occurring in Omaha**. In the same year, the YWCA received 195 calls to its hotline regarding incidents of sexual assault.