Don’t Just Stand By…

2014 has seen an explosion of interest in Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination at universities. The same law that opened the school doors and playing fields to all genders, is now serving the cause of reducing sexual violence on college campuses. Interest has come from student-led advocacy, the White House, the Senate, federal agencies, and has been a cover story of Time magazine and The Rolling Stone. Our campuses are determined to protect our students from assault and to punish and/or criminally prosecute those who cross the line.

One of the concepts to receive well-deserved attention is the role of the “bystander.” Psychologists long-ago noted what they call the “bystander effect.” That is – humans will sometimes stand by while something terrible occurs hoping (or falsely trusting) that someone else will take care of the problem.

Many programs now exist to convert bystanders from an idle “effect” into an active “intervention.” These programs can help your members be active interveners to protect your members, your organization, and your guests. Basically, the steps are:

Pay Attention.
Are there situations that create hazards for sexual assault or discrimination?

Consider Your Role.
Is there something you can do to make the situation better, and prevent an assault or violence?

Consider the Possibilities and Choose to Act Safely.
There are numerous programs which teach effective, and proven, strategies to intervene before harm occurs.