

# Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



A Publication of the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch

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## Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

**T**he Metropolitan Police Department maintains its commitment to support, assist and educate victims of crime of their rights and services in the District of Columbia. In particular, the Victim Services Branch stays in constant communication with victims and serves as a liaison to families on behalf of the Department. Our communication efforts are

timely, responsive, and sincere. We inform about the status of the cases and ensure victims have access to pertinent valuable resources that will help them as they navigate through the justice system. As spring tends to be the time for renewing ideas and opportunities, we take this time to renew our goal of helping. It is our hope that we are doing our very best to meet your needs as survivors

of homicide and other violent crimes. Moreover, we pledge our continued efforts to bring the most meaningful and efficient services on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Department.

Sincerely,

Tyria Fields,  
Manager

## Upcoming Events and Activities

Survivors of Homicide, Inc:  
Mother's Day Breakfast

**When:** Sunday, May 9, 2010  
**Time:** 8:30am -11am  
**Where:** The Washington Court Hotel  
525 New Jersey Ave. NW  
**Contact:** Julia Dunkins  
Survivors of Homicide, Inc.  
(202) 882-9190

Wendt Center Second Annual  
Memorial Butterfly Release:  
In Remembrance of someone you  
loved...

Release a butterfly and hear the name of  
your loved one read aloud during a special  
commemorative ceremony.

**When:** Saturday, May 23, 2010  
**Time:** 2pm-4pm  
**Where:** Garfield Park  
3rd & G Street, SE  
Washington, DC  
**Contact:** For more information  
and detailed direction visit  
[www.wendtbutterflies.org](http://www.wendtbutterflies.org)  
or call (202) 624-0010

Wendt Center Camp Forget-Me-Not/  
Camp Erin DC

The Wendt Center Grief camp is designed for  
children 6-16 years of age to explore grief. It's  
a place where a child's self expression is heard,  
valued and honored, but it's not designed as a  
replacement for therapy.

**When:** Friday-Sunday  
June 11-13, 2010  
**Where:** Arlington Echo Educational Center  
Millersville, Maryland  
**Contact:** In reference to Camper  
Information, call Cynthia Pearson  
(202) 204-5022 or email  
[cpearson@wendtcenter.org](mailto:cpearson@wendtcenter.org)  
For Volunteer opportunities contact  
Kecia Hill (202) 204-5025  
or email [khill@wendtcenter.org](mailto:khill@wendtcenter.org)

Metropolitan Police Department  
(Major Case Victims Unit, MCVU)  
Next-of-Kin Meeting

The Major Case Victims Unit will host a Next-  
of-Kin Meeting for families of Major Cases  
homicides (cold cases) 2006 and prior.

**When:** Wednesday, June 23, 2010  
**Where:** Metropolitan Police  
Department Headquarters

300 Indiana Avenue, NW  
3rd Floor, Conference  
Room, Washington, DC

**Contact:** Tyria Fields (202) 724-4339  
by Monday, May 31, 2010

2010 National Center for Victims of  
Crime (NCVC) National Conference

This year's conference focus is a  
multidisciplinary approach to the sharing of  
promising practices, effective programs and  
policies.

**When:** Tuesday-Thursday,  
September 14-16, 2010  
**Where:** Hilton New Orleans  
Riverside, Two Poydras  
Street, New Orleans, LA 7130  
**Contact:** National Center for Victims of  
Crime  
2000 M Street, NW Suite 480  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 467-8700 or visit website  
at [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

*Submitted by Dawn M. Christie*

# NEXT OF KIN

To commemorate Crime Victims' Rights Week 2010, the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit hosted Next-of-Kin Meeting as a week long event; April 12-15, 2010. The meeting was held at the new Homicide Branch Office at 101 M Street, SW. The meeting was open to the immediate family members of Open Homicide Cases (2007-2010) and appointments could be scheduled from noon to 8 pm.

Resources made available to meet the needs of families, included information from service providers who specialize in

Child Grief and Trauma. The importance of providing extra support to children following a homicide was emphasized. It is important to let children know that someone is there for them and they are not alone.

Here's a list of suggestions of how to help young people cope with trauma:

- » Maintain their usual daily schedule;
- » Give them extra time/attention;
- » Offer physical closeness (additional holding, touching, hugging and expressions of love);
- » Explain and answer questions honestly (don't be

afraid to admit you don't know the answer to some of their questions);

- » Listen to their fears and concerns;
- » Encourage time to play, write, and create (this relieves stress and allows them to tell their stories).

Memories are important to children. Let them to tell and retell their experiences, this is how they process their experiences and move on. (Adapted from resources compiled by the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing and the National Center for Victims of Crime)

*Submitted by Marlene Castro*

## Frequently Asked Questions About Crime Victims

### DC Vital Record Division

825 North Capitol St. NE,  
1st Floor, Room 1312  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 442-9303

Requests for death certificates may also be completed online, printed, and submitted via mail. Visit: Department of Health's Vital Records Division website at: <http://doh.dc.gov/doh/cwp/view,a,3,q,573450,dohNavID,1787,dohNav,33120|33139>

**Q: How do I obtain a copy of my loved one's death certificate?**

**A:** Though it is customary for families to receive a copy of the death certificate from the funeral home, additional copies may be necessary in the future. To obtain a copy of your loved one's birth or death certificate, you may request it in person at the Department of Health's Vital Records Division, by mail, or by telephone through the VitalChek service.

**Q: What documentation do I need to provide the Vital Records Division with?**

**A:** The Vital Records Division requires all persons requesting a death certificate provide a valid photo ID and an \$18 fee to obtain a copy of a death certificate. Payment must be in the form of a cashier's check or money order payable to DC Treasurer.

**Q: If my loved one's remains were taken to the Medical Examiner's Office in Maryland who do I contact for information on obtaining a copy of the death certificate?**

**A:** For a recorded message about obtaining birth, death, or marriage certificates in Maryland, please call (410) 764-3038 (Baltimore local call) or 1-800-832-3277 (toll-free call).

*Submitted by Megan Riley*

## Victim Services in Motion

### For further information contact:

Kayce Simmons  
Victim Specialist  
(202) 724-4339

In recognition of National Victims' Rights Week, April 19-23, 2010, the Victim Services Branch coordinated a public awareness campaign. This campaign consisted of distributing flyers and posters in public locations including po-

lice districts, churches, libraries, recreation and community centers, grocery stores, and homeless shelters informing citizens of their rights as crime victims. Each poster and flyer contains contact information for the units within the Victim Services Branch. Secondary ho-

micide, domestic violence, and sexual assault victims or loved ones of victims should feel free to contact the numbers to connect with victim specialists.

*Submitted by Kayce Simmons*

## Victims Have the Right to Know

Local Vine area numbers for the region are:

DC: 1-877-329-7894  
MD: 1-866-634-8463  
VA: 1-800-467-4943

In an effort to increase awareness in the area of victim notification, the Victim Services Branch is collaborating with the DC Department of Corrections to provide information which enables crime victims to be notified immediately regarding updates and status of an offender criminal case. Victims have the right to be notified of the status of an offender custody; changes in custody, release, probation, transfer and escape; and to be notified in a timely manner.

The District of Columbia Department of Corrections facilitates victim notification through a system called VINE, which stands for Victims Information Notification Everyday. Nationally, VINE gives crime victims and other concerned citizens access to time-

ly and reliable information and notification of offenders' status 24 hours a day - over the telephone, through the internet, by email, and text message (SMS) or TTY device.

The benefits of VINE are enormous for victims, citizens and law enforcement. For example, victims have free access to critical data at all times, with around-the-clock support from live operators. The VINE system provides victims with the ability to focus on their everyday lives, while giving victim service providers the ability to focus on their core responsibilities serving victims.

VINE users can register through their participating state or county notification everyday. Users must also notify VINE of

any changes or updates in their contact information and or address.

The Metropolitan Police Department, Victim Services Branch has VINE awareness materials and handouts including VINE cups, mouse pads, note pads and pens-to increase awareness of VINE services. For additional information, or to obtain VINE materials, please contact: **Helen Hall**, Victim Specialist, located at 300 Indiana Avenue NW Room #3121 at **(202) 727-6007**.

*Submitted by Helen Hall*

## What is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)?

For further information onto:

<http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/what-is-saam>.

SAAM, observed in April, is dedicated to making a conscious effort to raise awareness about and prevent sexual violence through special events throughout the nation. The goal of SAAM has always been to raise public awareness about sexual violence (focusing on sexual assault and rape) and to educate communities and individuals about how to prevent sexual

violence.

The focus of the 2010 SAAM campaign is preventing sexual violence on our campuses. Consider the latest research on sexual victimization of college women which indicates one in five college women will be victims of sexual violence before she graduates. It's staggering to think that women across the nation are victimized by a silent

epidemic that remains so prevalent in our society. This is why SAAM is important to communities, because it will provide an excellent opportunity for individuals to become involved with community movements that advocate for change and prevention.

*Submitted by Esther U. Thomas*

## How May We Assist You?

### Victim Services Branch

Tyria Fields ..... Manager ..... 724-4339 ..... [tyria.fields@dc.gov](mailto:tyria.fields@dc.gov)

### Family Liaison Specialists Unit

Carla Okonkwo ..... Supervisor ..... 645-9629 ..... [carla.okonkwo@dc.gov](mailto:carla.okonkwo@dc.gov)  
Marlene Castro ..... Family Liaison Specialist ..... 645-9631 ..... [marlene.castro@dc.gov](mailto:marlene.castro@dc.gov)  
Megan Riley ..... Family Liaison Specialist ..... 645-5537 ..... [megan.riley@dc.gov](mailto:megan.riley@dc.gov)

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) provides support services to homicide victims and survivors throughout the investigative process.

### Victim Specialists Unit

Helen Hall ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-6007 ..... [helen.hall@dc.gov](mailto:helen.hall@dc.gov)  
Kayce Simmons ..... Victim Specialist ..... 724-2215 ..... [kayce.simmons@dc.gov](mailto:kayce.simmons@dc.gov)  
Esther U. Thomas ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-6006 ..... [estheru.thomas@dc.gov](mailto:estheru.thomas@dc.gov)

The Victim Specialists Unit (VSU) provides support, information, and referrals to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

### Major Case Victims Unit

Dawn M. Christie ..... Senior Victim Specialist ..... 727-7139 ..... [dawnm.christie@dc.gov](mailto:dawnm.christie@dc.gov)  
Laverne Harley ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-5391 ..... [laverne.harley@dc.gov](mailto:laverne.harley@dc.gov)

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) provides supportive services to secondary victims of unsolved homicides. Additionally, this unit offers victim services and assistance to victims of violent assaults in the District of Columbia.

Please Note: All numbers are area code (202).



## Fairness.Dignity.Respect

**N**ational Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 18-24, 2010. In its 29 years of observation, this national week-long initiative offers an opportunity to promote public awareness of crime victims' rights. This year's theme: "*Fairness. Dignity. Respect.*" encourages us to look back to a time when crime victims were not afforded basic supportive services and to see how far we've progressed since then. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf.

With fairness, dignity and re-

spect, the Metropolitan Police Department celebrates the progress and accomplishments in law enforcement toward working with victims. We have committed ourselves to ensuring that all victims know about and can exercise their rights to victim services. The Metropolitan Police Department has taken the lead regarding enhancing communications and services to victims of crime in the District of Columbia. We remain unwavering in acknowledging the challenges faced by victims of crime and readily promote programs and services to help victims adjust to life after a victimization.

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Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
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