

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Spring 2011 | Volume 3, Issue 2

Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Throughout the year, but most importantly during Crime Victims Rights Week, we reflect on the importance of providing education, support and advocacy to victims and survivors of crime. As first responders, the members of the Metropolitan Police Department are often the first point of contact for victims of crime. We readily ensure victims have access

to supportive services which help victims rebuild their lives after victimization. Through these services, victims can gain a sense of dignity as they navigate the criminal justice system in search of justice. In recognizing Crime Victims' Rights Week, the Victim Services Branch celebrates this year's theme, "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past" and renews its efforts to make sure victims have a

voice from the beginning of the criminal justice process.

Sincerely,

Manager

Upcoming Events and Activities

Next of Kin

During the week before National Crime Victims' Rights Week - April 4-8, 2011 - the Family Liaison Specialists Unit will host Next-of-Kin (NOK) Meetings. These meetings allow families to meet with detectives concerning their loved one's cases. NOK meetings will be held at 101 M Street, SW (Homicide Branch). Families will have the opportunity to schedule appointments between 12 pm and 8 pm. Please contact Carla Okonkwo on (202) 625-9629 for further information.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Each April Since 1981, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has helped lead communities throughout the country in their annual observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCRVW) by promoting victims' rights and honor-

ing crime victims as well as those who advocate on their behalf. The theme for NCRVW 2011 is "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past." For additional information visit <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncrvw/>.

Annual Awards Ceremony

In observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the United States Attorney's Office (USAO), District of Columbia will host an award ceremony honoring crime victims and advocates. For additional information, call (202) 514-7566.

Host: Office of the US Attorney, Victim Witness Assistance Unit
When: April 14, 2011
Time: 2pm - 4pm
Where: 555 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC
Contact: Victim Witness Assistance Unit (202) 252-7130

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Every April, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center has encouraged communities throughout the country to observe Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The campaign focuses on ending sexual violence in neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, and schools. The theme for SAAM 2011 is "It's time...to get involved." For additional information, visit: <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/current-campaign>.

Submitted by Kayce Simmons

Frequently Asked Questions About Unsolved Homicides

Q: What is a "cold case?"

A: "Cold case" refers to a crime which all new information and leads have been exhausted. New information or leads may later be received that can result in the successful closure of a case.

Q: What happens to an unsolved homicide case?

A: MPD never closes a case until it is solved. There is no statute of limitations for homicide cases. These cases remain open and active pending new leads or information.

Q: Where does MPD get new information or leads?

A: MPD may receive new information from a previously unknown or reluctant witness, improvements in DNA testing, and other forensic technology. Many cases that were once unsolvable are now being solved and prosecuted successfully.

Q: What is a Victim Specialist?

A: A Victim Specialist (VS) acts as a liaison between the next-of-kin and the detective assigned to the case. The VS will provide

emotional support, advocacy, updates on the case, information on the criminal justice system, and referrals to appropriate community and government agencies. A VS provides education on victims' rights and assists in accessing the Crime Victims Compensation Program.

Submitted by La Verne Harley

Crime Victims Compensation Program

For more information, please contact:

Crime Victims
Compensation Program
515 5th Street, NW,
Room 109
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 879-4216
www.dccourts.gov

The Crime Victims Compensation Program assists victims of violent crime and their families with crime-related expenses. Awards for compensation are paid from the Crime Victims' Fund. This fund was established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA). Monies in the fund consist of assessments imposed upon criminal defendants, a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime and the general revenue of the court from court costs and filing fees. To be eligible to receive compensation from the Crime Victims Compensation Program, the crime must have occurred in the District and caused physical injury, emotional trauma or death. A District resident who suffers injuries from a terrorist act abroad is also eligible. The victim may not have participated in, consented to, or provoked the crime that caused his or her injury.

Violent Crimes Covered Under the Program

- » Homicide
- » Arson
- » Assault
- » Sexual abuse
- » Kidnapping
- » Robbery
- » Carjacking
- » Cruelty to children
- » Stalking
- » Burglary
- » Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Who Can Apply?

- » The primary victim
- » The secondary victim (family members, a person who legally assumes the obligation, or who voluntarily pays the medical expenses or funeral expenses for a victim)

Expenses Covered

- » Funerals and Burial: up to \$6,000
- » Medical expenses
- » Mental health counseling: up

- to \$3,000 for adults, \$6,000 for children (also for secondary victims)
- » Lost wages
- » Loss of support to dependents (where victim is deceased and social security is denied)
- » Crime scene clean-up; not to exceed \$1,000
- » Replacement of clothing held as evidence by law enforcement: not to exceed \$100 (does not apply where victim is deceased)
- » Transportation Costs to participate in the investigation or prosecution of the case, or to receive medical treatment or some other service necessary as a result of the crime: \$100 for local and \$500 for necessary out-of-state travel to receive services
- » Replacement of doors, windows, locks or other items to secure the victim's home: up to \$1,000

Submitted by Marlene Castro

Support and Encouragement for Homicide Survivors

The Metropolitan Police Department Survivors Outreach Email List Group serves as a means of communication for the police department, service providers, community organizations and survivors of homicide victims

in Washington, DC. The Victim Services Branch invites survivors of homicide victims to support each other by sharing inspirational, encouraging and thoughtful words on the Email List Group.

Please sign up to join the email list group so you can post

your comments, receive MPD's victim services-related news, and get updates on community activities and alerts about upcoming events. You may join at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group!DCSurvivors>.

Submitted by Carla Okonkwo

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month: It's Time... To Get Involved

Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention

To learn more about engaging in sexual violence prevention go to: <http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/bystander/overview>.

Hotline Numbers:

DC Rape Crisis Center:
(202) 333-7273

National Sexual Assault
Hotline: (800) 656-4673

National Teen Dating Abuse
Hotline: 1-866-331-9474

The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence. The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) supports survivors of sexual assault in the District of Columbia and joins state coalitions, organizations, and agencies working to end sexual assault. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is launching a new campaign to raise awareness for sexual assault prevention and the theme is: **"It's time...to get involved."**

A bystander approach

gives community members specific roles that they can use in preventing sexual violence, including naming and stopping situations before they happen and speaking out against behaviors that support sexual violence. This approach helps bystanders develop skills that make them effective and supportive allies to survivors of sexual violence. <http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/bystander/overview>

The goal is to recognize the relationship between our own day-to-day interactions and the larger culture within. It is important to the connection between cultural attitudes and the direct experiences of victims of

sexual assault. The climate that we create around us every day can be one that supports safety, communication, and envisions a world without sexual violence. It's up to all of us to rise to the challenge every day to bring this new world into being.

» It's time to be helpful.
Refer victims/survivors to resources in the community.

A bystander approach empowers each of us to get involved in preventing sexual violence.

Submitted by Esther Urbano Thomas

The Role of Advocacy in Victims Services

Further information can be found by contacting the National Center for Victims of Crime at:

National Center for Victims of Crime
2000 M Street NW
Suite 480
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 467-8700
Fax: (202) 467-8701

Historically, advocacy evolved out of the concerns of legal staffers to help those who need someone to argue or speak on their behalf. Over the years, advocacy has become a movement among volunteers and victim advocates supporting a cause of a group or community. Often, efforts are focused on improving services in the areas of homicide prevention, domestic violence, sexual assault, hate crimes and stalking. Victim advocates support the rights of victims of crime while providing case management and referrals to social resources. Advocacy

is humanity at its best—reaching and impacting global and local communities. The ultimate goal of advocacy is to empower individuals with knowledge and tools to recognize their rights and to make choices as victims of crime.

Advocacy significantly impacts the lives of victims of crime and their families. From networking and creating action plans for positive change to developing best practices or decision making policies, advocacy has been instrumental in enhancing services for victims of crime.

Although advocacy has con-

tributed to improving victim services and the lives of families in the community in which we live, we still have much work to do. The National Coalition for Victims in Action (NCVIA) encourages victims to become their own advocate by being proactive and getting involved in the proceedings during the criminal justice system process. The Metropolitan Police Department encourages everyone to learn what he or she can do to help the District of Columbia as we continue to enhance services for victims of crime.

Submitted by Helen Hall



Message from the Chief of Police

Over the past couple of decades, victim services have emerged to provide opportunities for victims to actively participate in the criminal justice system. We have found that if victims are educated about their rights and services, they can more actively participate in the criminal justice process. Celebrated April 10-16, 2011, "Reshaping the future, Honoring the Past" is this year's theme for Crime Victims Rights Week. During this time, volunteers, community leaders and victim serv-

es professionals come together to promote the awareness of victims' rights and work toward ensuring these rights are continued. The Metropolitan Police Department remains committed to ensuring that victims of crime have access to an empathetic and supportive law enforcement agency. We honor the struggles and accomplishments that have been made in victim services. Likewise, we pledge our support as new developments surface in shaping the future.

How May We Assist You?

Victim Services Branch

Tyria Fields Manager 724-4339 tyria.fields@dc.gov

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

Family Liaison Specialists Unit

Carla Okonkwo Supervisor 645-9629 carla.okonkwo@dc.gov

Marlene Castro Family Liaison Specialist 645-9631 marlene.castro@dc.gov

Megan Riley Family Liaison Specialist 645-5537 megan.riley@dc.gov

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

Victim Specialists Unit

Helen Hall Victim Specialist 727-6007 helen.hall@dc.gov

Kayce Simmons Victim Specialist 724-2215 kayce.simmons@dc.gov

Esther U. Thomas Victim Specialist 727-6006 estheru.thomas@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.

Major Case Victims Unit

Dawn M. Christie Victim Specialist 727-7139 dawnm.christie@dc.gov

Laverne Harley Victim Specialist 727-5391 laverne.harley@dc.gov

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



Metropolitan Police Department
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
101 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20024