

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

As we ready ourselves to enter into another year, striving for excellence continues to be paramount to victim services at the Metropolitan Police Department. Through this vision, the MPD has created an environment that supports those who have been impacted by crime and empowers them to participate in the criminal justice system. Quality victim services is

critical to law enforcement and the desire for excellence consumes every action and interaction that we have. From all of

us within the Victim Services Branch, we hope this edition of Empower is meaningful, educational, and encouraging.

Upcoming Events and Activities

January 2012

National Stalking Awareness Month

January is National Stalking Awareness Month. The National Center for Victims of Crime offers countless resources to bring awareness to stalking. Stalking is not an isolated crime. Many resources test and challenge current beliefs on stalking and bring these beliefs to light. For 5 minutes, 10 minutes, up to an hour, there is valuable resource material tailored to however much time one can commit to educating themselves on stalking. More information can be found through www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org/about.

February 2012

Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

Teen DV is often part of a generational struggle of violence. This initiative strives to educate these youths and make the public aware that Teen DV is a prominent problem. In the past, Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month has been a major proponent for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Many sponsored events will aim to empower teens to end dating violence, including Break the Cycle on Valentine's Day, February 14. www.teendvmonth.org.

2nd World Conference on Women's Shelters - February 27-March 1, 2012

Also in February will be this second conference on the effort toward ending Domestic Violence and promoting a safe environment when women have the courage to leave an abusive household. This event will have speakers and participants from around the world including activists and advocates to end violence against women. Scholarships are being accepted to attend this conference. For more information, visit www.worldshelterconference.org/.

March 2012

March 8 - United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace

Also known as National Women's Day, this event just celebrated its centennial last year in promoting women's rights and change. This day is marked by various conferences and events which feature speakers from the political, business, entertainment and community sectors. Each year has a theme that focuses the innovation and messages to be discussed such as women in the workforce and the portrayal of women in the media. The theme of this year's National Women's day is

yet to be determined. www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/.

National Youth Violence Prevention Week: March 19-23

This week aims to start a dialogue among communities to build awareness of youth violence. This week encourages communities to develop outreach programs and service projects that will better the community as a whole. Each of the five days has a specific theme sponsored by a youth-serving organization. The days of March 2012 are promoting tolerance, managing your anger, resolving conflicts peacefully, supporting safety, and uniting in action. Through this effort, we hope to give youths the courage to speak out about their abuse and get the help they need, creating safer communities and homes for children and adolescents. If you are interested in getting involved, the National Youth Violence Prevention Campaign provides step by step plans as well as informational ecards for each day's theme on their website: www.nyvpw.org/index.html

—Submitted by Alexandria Flatter

Celebrating the Season with Our Fourth Annual Tree of Remembrance



On December 3rd 2011, The Metropolitan Police Department held its 4th Annual Tree of Remembrance Event. Each year this special holiday event is organized by the Investigative Services Bureau, Criminal Investigations Division, Victim Services Branch. This year over 300 families and friends attended the event. Each family was provided a beautiful personalized ornament honor-

ing their loved one. Families got to adorn the tree with the ornaments during the event. Afterwards, they were given the ornaments to take home in memory of their loved ones. The names of each victim were read during a slide show presentation of photos submitted by the families. This annual event is another way that the Metropolitan Police Department supports families as well as serves as a reminder

that they are not alone in remembering their loved ones. Attendees were also provided resources and literature on grief and coping with the holidays. Special thanks to the following service providers: Survivors of Homicide, Inc; Torch of Hope, Inc; East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership; Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6Co2; ROOT, Inc; and the many volunteers for the support.

Submitted by Marlene Castro

Tips for Coping with the Holidays

Additional Support Resources:
National Center for Victims of Crime
2000 M Street NW, Suite 480
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 467-8700
Fax: (202) 467-8701
www.ncvc.org

The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing
(202) 624-0010
www.wendtcenter.org

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS)
Resource for military families
National Headquarters
910 17th Street, NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006
Main Phone: (202) 588-TAPS (8277)
Business Phone: (202) 457-8277
Hotline: 800-959-TAPS (800-959-8277)
info@taps.org
www.taps.org

Holidays can be a very difficult and challenging time for families and friends who have lost a loved one to homicide. Below are some coping strategies taken from several organizations whose mission is to support families during times of grief. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season. **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community and other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. Be particularly mindful of the children in your family. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and ritu-

als often change as well. Don't be afraid to change traditions. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange, or buy a small gift for your loved one — then give it to someone who might otherwise be without a gift. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Consider setting a place at the holiday

table for your loved one — perhaps leave a single flower or a lit a candle on their plate. **Learn to say no.** Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. Avoid doing things that you are uncomfortable with just because you think it is expected of you. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm. Just talking sometimes leads to new solutions.

Submitted by Helen Hall

Reward Posters for Unsolved Cases



Reward posters are offered by the Metropolitan Police Department to help solve homicide cases. This resource provides information that may lead to a case being solved. The posters highlight the location, date, time and

the name of the decedent. Further, reward posters give the telephone tip line, anonymous texting information, and explanation of financial rewards for any tips provided that lead to solving a case. If you are interested in reviewing the "Reward Posters" unsolved cases

website please visit www.mpdcd.gov/unsolved. If you are interested in requesting reward posters, please feel free to contact the Victim Service Branch at (202) 724-4339.

Submitted by Dawn Christie

Update from Next-of-Kin Meeting, October 3-7



The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) held a Next-of-Kin meeting during the week of October 3–7, 2011 at the Homicide Branch. Attendees included 26 family members with open homicide cases from 2011. Those in attendance had the opportunity to meet personally with the detective investigating their loved one's case to address any personal concerns or questions regarding the investigation. Next-of-Kin meetings offer an opportunity for survivors to be empowered with information, and take an active role in the investigative process. MPD's Family Liaison Specialists Unit assists in facilitating the communication between families and MPD through these meetings and

throughout the year. Losing a loved one to homicide has far-reaching effects on family, friends, and the community as a whole. The Next-of-Kin Meetings provide an opportunity for MPD to also empower survivors with resources to support them through the grief process. Though grief touches many lives after a homicide, October's Next-of-Kin meeting focused on supporting children through the grief process. Families received a children's grief care kit that consisted of tools and information to help caretakers support grieving children and promote the healing process. The kits included a teddy bear, crayons, and a memory journal to help children express and process their feelings through drawing,

journaling and play activities. Information for caretakers included cards with tips on how to talk to children about death and different activities adults can do with children to support them through the grief process and promote healing. MPD continues to support survivors throughout their grief journey by providing assistance, resources, information, and compassion for individuals of all ages to seek healing. The next meeting for families of homicide victims will be held in April 2012 and will be open to families with open homicide cases occurring between the years 2009-2012, your point of contact will be the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363.

Submitted Megan Riley

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).

Letters & Kudos

Share your story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to victim.services@dc.gov or send via US Mail to:

Victim Services Branch

Family Liaison Specialists Unit
101 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Ms. Fields —

My son was the victim of a homicide in the District of Columbia on July 9, 2011. I received the Summer 2011 Empower Newsletter and saw the article about the Tree of Remembrance. I would very much like to receive information on how my family and I can participate in the activity.

I want to thank the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch and all those involved for the assistance and information that is continually provided to the families of homicide victims. The services you provide has helped me and my family to try and deal with the loss of our loved one.

Thank you and I look forward to receiving future edi-

tions of the Newsletter.

—D.W.

Hi Megan,

Thank you so much for the card it was so nice, I really appreciate you guys so much, the card brought happy tears to my eyes. 4yrs and still going strong, love and miss RaShawn but knowing that you all have my family in your thoughts and prayers, let's me know that my family is not alone. And RaShawn death is not in vane.

Sincerely,

—D.W.

Hello Tyria, I'm hoping that you receive this email. I'm just

reaching out to tell you that your team at the Victim Service Branch is [made up of] really nice people!

My younger brother was a homicide victim and I went in and meet with Ms.Castro who assisted me with the burial funds, and she was such a pleasure to work with and made things a lot easier on me.

During the time that has passed I have been receiving newsletters from you guys, which have been very helpful. I also wanted to know if I could get the dates to the Next of Kin Meetings, for I would like to know what progress, if any, is being made on this case.

Again, kudos to you and your team!!

—A.J.



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