

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

Throughout the year, we have interacted with survivors from various backgrounds and cultures. And one thing each family has in common is a desire and need to regain some form of order in their lives following a homicide. That is the underlying mission and intent of the Victim Services Branch. Our entire purpose is to show compassion, pro-

vide education about the criminal justice process, advocate on behalf of families, and connect families to community-based resources. We provide organization to chaos. We remain a constant unwavering support to families impacted by homicide in the District of Columbia. We are here to help address your concerns whether it is lack of information or lack of access to

community services. We act as a bridge between you and services. As we enter into another year, we look forward to working with you and promise to maintain the same level of victim services and consideration.

From all of us at the Victim Services Branch, Enjoy!

Megan Riley *Robert Harley* *Esther U. Thomas* *Jennifer Murphy*
Dana Smith *Kaye Simmons* *Julia Hall*
Phillip *Neil* *Monique Castro*

Upcoming Events and Activities

Seventh Annual National Stalking Awareness Month

January 2010 will mark the 7th observance of National Stalking Awareness Month. Throughout the month the Stalking Resource Center and the Office on Violence Against Women will be updating the National Stalking Awareness Month Web site at www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org with new materials and resources.

Hosts: National Center for Victims of Crime

When: January 2010

29th Annual National Crime Victim's Rights Week

The Office of Victims of Crime will help to lead communities throughout the country in their observance of National Crime Victims Rights Week April 18 – 24, 2010. Rallies, candlelight vigils and a host of commemorative activities are held each year to promote victims rights and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. For additional information contact the OVC Victim Assistance for the District of Columbia at (202) 727-6537.

OVC will hold two prelude events in the Nation's Capitol. Mark your calendar now. Additional information is forthcoming.

National Observance and Candlelight Ceremony

When: April 15, 2010

National Crime Victim's Service Awards Ceremony

When: April 16, 2010

Motorcycle Ride for Peace

When: Saturday, April 24, 2010

Where: Anacostia Roller Skating Ring Pavilion
1900 Anacostia Drive, SE
Washington, DC

Time: 12pm-5pm

Contact: DC Alliance, Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc
(240) 603-5628

NEXT OF KIN

On October 21, 2009 the Metropolitan Police Department held the ninth Next of Kin (NOK) meeting at the Police Academy. Families of open 2009 cases met with the Detectives and Sergeants to discuss the progress of their loved ones' homicide cases. One mother expressed how she appreciated having an opportunity to communicate

her questions and concerns in person, as opposed to the phone. Even in cases where there is little, or no new information to share, families still value having the opportunity to be heard in a personal one-on-one meeting. The Family Liaison Specialist Unit (FLSU) also took this opportunity to strengthen their relationship with each family, and to remind them

that the unit is here to assist them with their individual needs. The families were also provided with referrals and resources to various community-based organizations. This meeting was also timely for FLSU to connect families with organizations providing toys for Christmas. The next NOK meeting will take place in April 2010.

Frequently Asked Questions About Crime Victims

Q: Can remembering my loved ones serve a positive purpose during the holiday season?

A: Engaging in events or activities to remember your loved one can allow you to cope with your grief in a constructive way. Commemorative activities are effective and meaningful, whether held privately or collectively, when they have significance to both the deceased and to the survivor.

Q: What are some ways to honor my loved one's memory?

A: Continue a tradition that you shared with your loved one, or start a new tradition.

- » Prepare a favorite meal enjoyed by your loved one. Go to their favorite restaurant.
- » Plant a tree, shrub, or other plant in their memory; put a plaque/marker dedicating a plant/tree that is already rooted in the ground.
- » Light a candle in honor of your loved one on special

occasions or certain times of the day.

- » Play music, watch a film, or enjoy a book they enjoyed.
- » Journal memories, write your loved one a letter, or compose a song at: <http://www.customcraftedsongs.com/howitworks/>
- » Become an activist in the community or volunteer for an organization in memory of your loved one.
- » Create a memory scrapbook with photographs, letters, postcards, and other memories from your life together.
- » Visit your loved one's burial site – you may bring flowers, release balloons, or just sit quietly.
- » Memorialize your loved one in cyberspace by creating your loved one's very own memorial website. Your memorial offers the ability to upload photographs, audio, videos, a timeline, and your loved one's personal story. Visitors to your memorial will also be able to light virtual can-

dles, leave tributes, condolences and write down their memories of the deceased.

<http://www.celebratemylife.com.au/>
<http://www.remembered-forever.org/>, <http://tribute.perfectmemorials.com> (Free!)

Use clothing from your loved one to cover a teddy bear.

<http://www.carriebears.com>

For Kids:

One way adults can provide children support is to spend time with them creating special activities they can do to remember.

- » Memory collage – cut pictures & words out of magazines that remind you of your loved one & make a collage.
- » Memory box – write down a memory to share and deposit in the box so they can be read & reread for years to come.

Outreach Activities

The Victim Services Branch (VSB) of the Metropolitan Police Department is committed to assisting victims of crime and highlighting the resources available to the families and survivors of homicide cases. In our continued efforts to support and empower these families VSB has participated in many events monthly throughout the city to provide awareness of the supportive services offered. The following are highlights of the important events that took place these past months which VSB was actively involved.

- » The National Day of Remembrance (Commemorative Symposium & Ceremony) was held at the Ronald Regan Building on Friday, September 25, 2009 and sponsored by three organizations: Parents of Murdered Children, Inc., Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc. The Victim Services Branch played an integral role in this event as one of the selected panel presenters. This event gave friends and families an opportunity to come together in remembrance of their love one's loss to homicide and to learn about different organizations and services offered to survivors of crime.
- » The 26th Annual National Night-Out citywide kickoff celebration was held on Tuesday, August 4, 2009. It is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support and participation in anti-crime initiatives, and to strengthen police and community partnerships. The VSB staff provided information tables and disseminated pamphlets about homicide, sexual assault, hate crimes, domestic violence, and same sex crimes to attendees from different Wards in the District.
- » A Mother's Summertime Tea event was held at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel on Sunday, August 31, 2009. This free event was in recognition of survivors of homicide and victims of violent crimes with a focus on promoting healing. The Victim Services Branch (VSB) staff assisted in bringing together approximately 200 people consisting of friends, families, counselors and victim advocates to attend this event to provide support, guidance, and encouragement to the survivors of crime.
- » A Queen For A Day event was held on Thursday, October 29, 2009 for survivor victims of domestic violence. This event was

sponsored by Breaking the Silence East Of the River Committee (BSERC), which the Metropolitan Police Department, Victim Services Branch (VSB) is a member. The purpose of this committee is to raise awareness about domestic violence and provide training to the communities located East of the Anacostia Rivers in Wards 6, 7, and 8 in the District of Columbia. This event gave 25 survivor victims of domestic violence an opportunity to feel like a "Queen For A Day" by each obtaining facials, manicures, pedicures, and other pampering activities to enhance their self esteem.

- » 7th District Domestic Violence Summit was held at Patterson Elementary School on Saturday, October 17, 2009 and sponsored by Metropolitan Police Department. In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month the Victim Services Branch (VSB) and other local community base service providers were in attendance for this summit. The VSB staff arranged an information table which provided brochures on domestic violence, sexual assault, victims rights, and the crime victim compensation program.

Happy Holidays on Behalf of the Criminal Investigation Division

Holiday Greetings on behalf of the men and women of the Criminal Investigations Division of the Metropolitan Police Department. I consider it a privilege for this opportunity to forward a message of holiday wishes to the surviving family and friends of the victims of violence on behalf of our members. We realize this season, intended to be a celebration, stirs

memories of those you have lost. Though the thoughts and memories are of past joyous times shared with them, there is the pain of loss. It is our sincere hope that you accept our realization that:

***Death leaves a heartache
no one can heal,
love leaves a memory
no one can steal.***

~From a headstone in Ireland

Therefore, we renew to you our commitment to work and solve all the cases we can and find all the offenders we can, all the while knowing that we will never be satisfied as long as anyone has to suffer the loss of their loved one. Our wish is for your comfort and peace during this holiday season.

*- Submitted by
Commander Rodney Parks*

Metropolitan Police Department 2nd Annual Tree of Remembrance Event

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) hosted their 2nd Annual Tree of Remembrance Event which was hosted by MPD Criminal Investigation Division, Victim Services Branch. This special event was held on Saturday, December 5, 2009 at First District Headquarters (formerly known as Bowen Elementary School). The Tree of Remembrance event was attended by over 495 friends and families members to memorialize and honor their love ones loss to homicide. MPD recognized that during this time of the year the anticipation of holidays may cause new/returning emo-

tions or despair, and other forms of anxiety. During the course of this special event, in conjunction with viewing the picture slideshow, friends and families were presented with an ornament to place on the tree in honor of their love one. The Victim Services Branch has received several telephone calls, emails, cards, and expressions of appreciation for such a memorable event in honor of their loved ones.



Coping with the Holiday Season

The Metropolitan Police Department recognizes that this time of year and the anticipation of holidays can be a difficult time for families and friends that have lost a loved one to homicide. Some families have found that the act of recognizing the holiday season as a sensitive time empowers them to take charge of the season, rather than allowing the season to control them. Here are some helpful tips to help you cope with the holidays.

- » Plan for the approaching holidays. Be aware that this might be a difficult time for you. The additional stress may affect you emotionally, cognitively and physically. This is a normal reaction and it is important to be pre-

pared for these feelings.

- » Recognize that holidays won't be the same. If you try to keep everything as it was, you'll be disappointed. Doing things a bit differently can acknowledge the change while preserving continuity with the past.
- » Be careful not to isolate yourself. It's alright to take time for yourself but don't cut yourself off from the support of family and friends.
- » Avoid additional stress. Decide what you really want to do, and avoid the activities you don't wish to participate.
- » Try to remember that you will receive cards from

well-meaning people who are hoping for your holidays to be happy. You don't have to read them. Just tuck them away for another time. Don't feel you have to reply at all.

- » Avoid eating lots of sweets during the holiday. Sweets tend to make us more depressed.

The Victim Services Branch is dedicated to providing supportive services, such as information, education, referrals, emotional support and crisis intervention to victims of homicide. If you and your family need additional support during this difficult holiday season please contact us at [\(202\) 645-6363](tel:2026456363).



Commander of the Homicide Branch

I am Michael Farish and in February 2009, I became the Commanding Official at the Homicide Branch. Although new to my current position, I have been with the Metropolitan Police Department for almost 28 years in various capacities. The majority of the past 17 years have been within the Homicide Branch in several roles, including being a Detective. My service in this Unit has been heartbreaking and rewarding. Still, I remain

committed to solving homicide cases. In my opinion, there is no greater responsibility in policing than working homicide cases. I welcome the opportunity to speak with you. My contact is **(202) 645-5556**.

Most recently, the Homicide Branch has moved to a new location. That location is 101 M St, SW (old Bowen Elementary School).

Letters - Kudos

Just thinking about your kindness and understanding with me at the time of the homicide, and wanted to let you know even though the case is no longer the focus now since they made the one arrest, and the others are still probably out there killing or doing whatever it is those hoodlums do. I'm sure they will get what they deserve eventually. I hope so, anyway.

I hope everything is fine with you and your family, people sometimes tends to forget the people that were around when they needed them, just letting you know you really helped me get through this ordeal with your understanding and patience. You will always be remembered, and I will always be grateful.

Sincerely,
R. T. B.

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

How May We Assist You?

Victim Services Branch

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

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

Esther U. Thomas Victim Specialist 727-6006 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
Laverne Harley Victim Specialist 727-5391 laverne.harley@dc.gov

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) supports and educates survivors of homicide victims during the reinvestigation of unsolved homicide cases.

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



Comments from the Chief of Police

As Chief of Police, I want to let you know that not one day goes by that we aren't looking to solve a case and make an arrest to help bring a level of closure to families of homicide victims. During the holiday season, my staff and I are extra sensitive to the sense of loss that can be felt by all survivors, from the youngest to the

oldest. My wish is that you are also feeling a sense of peace and hope, because you have the support of a police department that never gives up. We are here to provide you with assistance and to connect you with resources. Please know that you are in our hearts and thoughts this holiday season and that we are just a phone call away.

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