

# Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Spring 2017 | Volume 9, Issue 1

## Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

**D**uring the week of April 2-8, 2017, the Metropolitan Police Department celebrates National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) and its theme Strength. Resilience. Justice. Through strength, resilience and justice, we consistently develop caring, encouraging and em-

pathetic relationships with those impacted by crime. Survivors are aided in many ways during life-changing and stressful situations. Ensuring access to justice is immensely critical as survivors are reminded to take actions and stay connected to support systems. Members nurture a sense of renewed purpose

and accomplishment with victims as accountability is sought. It is the mission of the Victim Services Branch to foster trust and perseverance with each interaction using strength, resilience and justice.

## Upcoming Events and Activities

### May

#### Mother's Day Dinner

Friday, May 5, 2017, 6-9 pm  
R.I.S.E Center  
2730 MLK Jr Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20032  
Sponsored by Helping Hands, Inc.  
Contact: [Weston.Kerron@epa.gov](mailto:Weston.Kerron@epa.gov)

#### 24th Annual Mother's Day Brunch

May 14, 2017  
Call Julia Dunkins at (202) 258-2564.



#### Mental Health Awareness Month

1 in 5 Americans will be affected by a mental health condition in their lifetime. Mental Health not only impacts that individual, but it also affects their friends and family. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is dedicated to provide advocacy, education, support, and develop public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives. Visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) for more information.

#### National Police Week

May 15 - 21

Tens of thousands of police officers from across the country come to Washington, D.C. to honor the lives of the fallen police officers. See [www.policeweek.org](http://www.policeweek.org) for a detailed schedule and more information.



### June

#### The 'Hope Without Boundaries' 5K Walk/Run

June 3

BLACK & MISSING FOUNDATION



A fundraiser opportunity for the Black & Missing Foundation, Inc., this organization aims to bring awareness to missing persons of color, help the families, and educate the community on personal safety. To register, visit [www.hwb5k.org](http://www.hwb5k.org)

#### Cold Case Next of Kin

TBD

MPD's Cold Case Next of Kin meeting will be held in June (date to be determined) contact FLSU (202) 645-6363 for more information.

#### Unapologetically Proud! Pride 2017

June 8-11

This is an opportunity to bring together the LGBT community and celebrate, as well as continue to fight for equal rights. For more information visit [www.capitalpride.org](http://www.capitalpride.org)

#### Wendt Center for Loss & Healing Camp Forget-Me-Not / Camp Erin DC

June 23-25



This free opportunity for children ages 7-17 to deal with grief in a safe space, away from everyday life. For applications email [camp@wendtcenter.org](mailto:camp@wendtcenter.org) or call (202) 624-0010 ext. 150.

### August

#### National Night Out

Tuesday, August 1



National Night Out is an opportunity to build camaraderie with the Community and Law Enforcement, as well as help heighten crime and drug prevention awareness. Events will be held in all seven police districts, for more information visit: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/page/national-night-out>.

—Amy Uplinger

## Refuse the Culture of Silence

The month of April is dedicated to Sexual Assault Awareness. This year's campaign theme for sexual assault awareness is Engaging New Voices. Culture is a word that can be widely defined, as the tradition and customs, of a nation, people or social group. The culture of silence heavily impacts our society. This year's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month is based on incorporating groups whose influence can play a critical role in changing the culture of silence. We have to include all



voices to catalyze change and prevent sexual violence. It's up to us to break

**Show Your Support During Denim Day**  
The NSVRC website has launched a social media challenge — 30 days of SAAM — challenging participants to demonstrate their support by completing small, yet impactful, prompts each day to spread awareness. Victim Services Branch will host #DenimDay on Wednesday, April 26, 2017, in front of MPD Headquarters from 11 AM to Noon. Our goal is to unite with community partners and MPD in an effort to demonstrate our continued support and dedication to victims of Sexual Assault. Make a statement to show up against sexual assault by wearing Denim on April 26th!

their silence and engage new voices. This year, National Sexual Violence Resource Center is engaging new voices such as:

- » Greek life
- » Parents
- » Coaches
- » Faith leaders
- » Survivors

» Community members.  
Many silent groups can play a critical role in changing our culture and we can start off by visiting those victims whose voices have not been heard or groups that does not speak out. Prevention requires addressing the root causes and social norms that allow sexual violence to exist. All input can turn into one big voice that eventually will be heard. On April 26th, the Victim Services Branch will be hosting Denim Day. I call upon all old and new voices to gather and help us demonstrate our support and dedication towards victims of sexual assault. Contact the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at [resources@nsvrc.org](mailto:resources@nsvrc.org) for additional information.

—Wondesha Gumbs

## Engaging New Voices: Sexual Assault and the LGBTQ Community

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month and the theme this year is engaging new voices. We would like to take this time to encourage those who have been silent, to speak up; because we are here to listen. A longstanding culture of Homophobia in our society has put LGBTQ people at a greater risk of sexual assault and other violent crimes. Often times when a member of the LGBTQ community is victimized, they remain silent because of perceived barriers to reporting and seeking care.

There tends to be “invisible” barriers for LGBTQ victims in regards to reporting sexual assaults. One of the most common obstacles faced, is that their experience will be minimized or not taken seriously. According to the National

Sexual Violence Resource Center and Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (2012), many victims struggle with being “outed” or having their sexual orientation revealed against their will. As challenging as these barriers may be, we encourage you to make a report and/or seek victim assistance.

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department is to treat the public with respect, dignity, and compassion. We have a team of highly skilled and professional victim advocates that are trained in working with sexual assault victims from all demographics, ensuring that their rights are protected. MPD also has the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Liaison Unit (LGBTLU) which is a team of dedicated officers that focuses

on the public safety needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. Metropolitan Police Department is devoted to breaking down all barriers that may affect reporting practices and making sure that every voice is heard.

Here in the District of Columbia, we are fortunate to have a wide-ranging network of victim and social services geared towards the LGBTQ community. These organizations can assist victims with wrap-around services necessary during the transition period resulting from victimization. For an extensive, alphabetical list of community resources, visit [www.lgbtq.dc.gov](http://www.lgbtq.dc.gov).

For assistance locating additional resources, please contact MPD Victim Services Branch at (202) 724-4339.

—Ashley Rinaldi

# 'Drugged Driving': Keeping Our Roads and Sidewalks Safe for Pedestrians

**W**ith spring fast approaching, pedestrians and drivers are out and about as walkways and roadways become filled with traffic and activity. The need for pedestrian and driver safety becomes paramount as Mothers Against Drunk and Drugged Driving (MADD) bring new awareness to the growing threat of drugged driving as with drunk driving, since its founding in 1980. While the substances are different, the results are the same—needless injuries and death on our roadways.

Drugged driving, like drunk driving, is a choice and a 100% preventable crime, leaving families and hearts broken. That's why MADD changed

its mission statement in 2015, to include "help fight drugged driving." MADD has long supported victims and survivors of drugged driving crashes. MADD has and will continue to support law enforcement's efforts to deter and detect drugged drivers to keep our roads safe.

There are many substance impairing drugs—both legal and illegal—that can impair driving skills.

- » Over-the-counter
- » Prescription
- » Legal medicinal/recreational marijuana
- » Illicit

In addition, drivers may get behind the wheel with a combination of alcohol and drugs, called "poly use."

Drugged driving has left many victims in its wake. In fact, MADD National President Colleen Sheehey-Church is a victim of poly-abuse driving. Colleen's 18-year-old son Dustin drowned after the car he was riding in, driven by a teen with alcohol and drugs in her system, ran off the road and into a river, trapping Dustin inside the vehicle (<http://www.madd.org/druggeddriving>).

If you or someone you love has been impacted by a drugged driver, please call **(877) MADD-HELP** to speak with a victim advocate, day or night.

For additional resources and information, visit (<http://www.madd.org/drugged-driving>)

—Helen Hall

## Next of Kin Meeting: Engaging Voices

### Resources

For more information contact MPD's Victim Services at (202) 724-4339 or (202) 645-6363.

**T**he Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch-Family Liaison Specialists Unit held Next-of-Kin meetings during the week of April 3-7, 2017 at the Homicide Branch. Family members with open homicide cases from 2012-2016 were invited to meet with the detective investigating their loved one's case. Survivors are strengthened and em-

powered when they are allowed to participate in the criminal justice process. The Next-of-Kin meetings were designed to give families an op-

portunity to be a part of the investigative process to have their concerns/questions addressed.

Losing a loved one to homicide has far-reaching effects on family, friends, and the community. The Victim Services Branch's goal is to educate and enlighten survivors with information on the grief process, and other resources that impact victims of violent crime.

In light of April being Sexual Assault Awareness Month, participants were provided information on events taking place throughout the District to support this year's theme, "Engaging New Voices."

At the spring NOK meetings, survivors were given action pledge cards to encourage them to become a VOICE for their loved ones and to help promote positive change as well as justice and

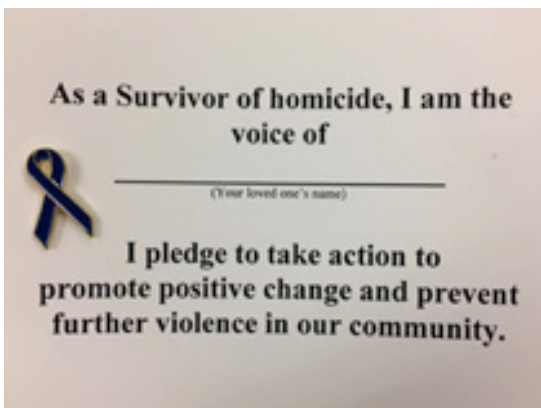
healing in their community.

Action steps can include:

- » Seek grief support
- » Encourage others to seek supportive services
- » Attend a violence prevention event in the community
- » Become a mentor or volunteer to make a positive impact in the community
- » Engage in a discussion on healthy relationships and conflict resolution
- » Explore ways to get involved with schools, faith community, government, etc.

It is our hope that survivors feel empowered to use their voices to play a role to help prevent violence for future generations.

—Megan Riley



# NCVRW 2017: Strength, Resilience and Justice

## Resources

For more information contact MPD's Victim Services at (202) 724-4339 or (202) 645-6363.

The National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2017 theme, "Strength, Resilience and, Justice" reflects on the importance of service providers and community working together to address the needs of those who are affected by crime. As well as bring public awareness to this issue. The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) recognizes that in order to build stronger and safer communities we must be accessible and build meaningful relationships to best serve the citizens and visitors to the District of Columbia.

MPD's Victim Services Branch (VSB) assist victims,



survivors and their families by providing on-going information about their rights and available programs and services that can help them cope with physical injury, emotional trauma, economic loss, and other supportive services. In an effort to assist all residence more efficiently, Specialists are located at several MPD District stations. MPD remains resilient as we respond to challenges to ensure that services and resources are available to all who are affected

by violence crimes. The Victim Services Branch strives to improve partnerships with grassroots and non-profit programs, community and system based agencies as well as those who assist marginalized populations. Additionally, Victim Specialists conduct presentation, set up resource tables, and facilitates workshop at various sites around the District to ensure communities are able to seek collective justice as they began the healing process to rebuild their lives.

—Marlene Castro



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Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
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