

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

Helping victims of crime is the mission of the Victim Services Branch. Each interaction is with the purpose of empowering victims and survivors thereby enhancing the

quality of life for the citizens of and visitors to the District of Columbia. Through regular communication and strengthened relationships we offer advocacy, education, and support to families impacted by

crime. We are the Metropolitan Police Department. We are here to help.

Upcoming Events and Activities

TBD

MPD Homicide Branch

TBD

Next-of-Kin Meetings of unsolved 2016 and 2017 homicide cases will take place in October. This is an opportunity to meet with the case assigned detective and discuss the status of the case.

For additional information call (202) 645.5556



October

Keep DC SAFE

Wednesday, October 4, 6-9 pm

Long View Gallery
Join us for the 4th Annual Keep DC SAFE Awards Reception! We'll enjoy live music, light refreshments, and good company while we celebrate the partners and volunteers who help us make DC a safer place for domestic violence survivors.

For more information: www.dcsafe.org



Paint the Town Purple



Monday, October 2

Metro Stations Across the District
Paint the Town Purple during our 8th annual domestic violence awareness month kick-off event. DCCADV staff, member programs and volunteers will be at local metro stations sharing resources, information and purple buttons to engage the community in preventing domestic violence.

For more information and to sign up: <http://bit.ly/PTTP2017>

—LaVerne Harley

MPD Victim Services Branch Listserv

The Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch (VSB) Listserv (formally DC-Survivors Listserv) was enhanced to include supportive services for survivors and vic-

tims of all crime. The listserv is used as a tool to improve communication and coordination of services, post announcements, meetings, and upcoming events for MPD and the community. We encour-

age you to join the Listserv at mpdvictimservices-subscribe@yahoo.com.

For more information contact **Carla Okonkwo** at (202) 645-6363 or carla.okonkwo@dc.gov.

—Carla Okonkwo

Everyone's Invited to the Next National Night Out

On Tuesday, August 1, 2017, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) invited all DC residents out in the community for National Night Out (NNO). This annual event is held worldwide and is sponsored by National Association of Town Watch (NATW). This event is geared to establish strong relationships between law enforcement and residents, crime prevention and safety, and show criminals the collaboration neighborhoods have developed to decrease on-going criminal behavior in their communities. The primary goal of NNO is to increase crime and drug prevention, create services for anti-crime programs locally



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and nationally, and strengthen communities and law enforcement collaborations. The residents of the District of Columbia had the opportunity to engage with community leaders, civic groups, local business owners, as well as other public service personnel in celebration of NNO. MPD was prepared for the NNO and ensured that all communities in all seven po-

lice districts were ready for the different activities that were scheduled which consisted of and not limited to: community cook-outs, block parties, fun games, moon bounces, dance competitions, visit from McGruff the Crime Dog, and so much more. While the NNO event of 2017 has ended, this invite provides you a grand opportunity to add this event to your calendar for year 2018—it's held the first Tuesday in August.

Keep in mind the NNO event is open to "ALL AGES"!!! If you want to get involved in future NNO activities in your community, please contact your local police district. SEE YOU ALL AT "2018 NATIONAL NIGHT OUT"!!!!

—Dawn Christie

Outreach Plays a Key Role in MPD's Community Policing Strategy

Community policing is a partnership between the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), residents, merchants, and service base agencies. The goal for these stakeholders is to become active allies to address crime prevention, increase public safety, trust, and improve communication. MPD's Victim Services Branch (VSB) plays a vital role in this partnership through public awareness and education. VSB staff partners with local shelters, apartment com-



plexes, churches, schools, and community based agencies to distribute informational material and resources throughout the District. Each year, VSB members conduct approximately 100 victim-centered outreach activities to address topics such as:

- » Victim rights;
- » Dynamics of domestic violence (DV);

- » Myths about DV in LG-BTQ communities;
- » Teen Dating Violence;
- » The Effects of DV on children;
- » Sexual assault awareness;
- » Grief and loss;
- » Aftermath of trauma;
- » Crime Victim Compensation;
- » Crime Prevention;
- » Homelessness;
- » Employment/volunteer fairs; and
- » Other supportive services.

Contact the Victim Service Branch for additional information at **202-724-4339** or **202-645-6363**.

—Carla Okonkwo

Donations Sought for Victims of DV to Obtain Free Cell Phones

wanted to take this opportunity to remind District residents about the cell phone donation program administered by the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV) in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Department. This program has collected and donated hundreds of used cell phones throughout the city for various domestic violence programs to give to survivors so they can call 911 in a life or death situation. Note: these cell phones do not come with minutes, but plans may be purchased separately. To donate your used cell phone, simply go to any MPD precinct and/or MPD Headquarters and contact Victim Specialist, **Beyshinah Woods**, at **202-727-6006** for a receipt. Cell phones may also be donated to DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV) by calling **202-299-1181**.

Another cell phone donation program is called Verizon HopeLine, which is a phone recycling program exclusive to Verizon that uses refurbished and recycled wireless equipment and Verizon Wireless services and equipment to help victims of domestic violence. Verizon's HopeLine® program assists organizations that help victims of domestic violence by providing cell phones with free airtime minutes. Each HopeLine phone has 3,000 minutes and 9,000 text messages that are available for use within a 1-year period or until they are depleted, whichever occurs first. To donate, just drop it off to any Verizon Wireless store or mail it in to Verizon, One Verizon Way, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920. Note: donations to Verizon HopeLine are not tax deductible. If you are a victim of domestic violence and would like a phone, please contact a

local domestic violence shelter, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **(800) 799-SAFE (7233)** or **(800) 787-3224** (TTY) or dial #HOPE from your Verizon Wireless phone. HopeLine phones are distributed only through shelters or social service agencies. If you are a domestic violence advocate and would like to order phones, please contact Verizon via email at contact@Verizon-HopeLine.com or leave a message at **847-706-1733**.

Finally, there are additional free cell phone programs such as Safelink and Assurance Wireless. These providers offer free cell phones to individuals who meet eligibility requirements set by each state where the service is provided. For more information, call Safelink at **1-800-SAFELINK (723-3546)** or Assurance Wireless at **888-898-4888**.

—Beyshinah Woods

How To Support Survivors of Homicide

Resources

For information and support, contact:

■ **Parents of Murder Children (POMC)**

www.pomc.com

■ **LegacyConnect**

<http://connect.legacy.com>

Nothing prepares a person for the death of a loved one, especially when it is violent and unexpected. Losing a relative through homicide can result in families grieving the victim as well as the way they died. Along with the grieving process, survivors often experience symptoms of trauma, safety concerns, lack of control and trust in their environment. Other common grief reactions are anger and guilt. The guilt because of their perceived failure to protect their loved one from harm. Friends and families are often confused and don't know what to say or how to help. It is during this vulnerable time that survivors need support from

friends, family, and their community. According to Legacy Connect, online grief support resources for survivors, below are several suggestions on ways to assist survivors:

Never say the following:

- » **I know how you feel.** Unless you have lost a loved one under the same circumstance, you don't really know how one feels.
- » **They are in a better place now.** This is not a comforting statement because the survivor believes the best place for their loved one is to be with them.
- » **God is good all the time.** While many survivors will look for spiritual support, others may start to doubt beliefs they held before the

event.

- » **Call me if you need anything.** People who are grieving are not in a state of mind to call even if they need you. It is up to you to call, check or stop by their home.
- Things you can say:
 - » "I'm sorry."
 - » "How can I support you?"
 - » "I'm here if you need someone to talk to."
 - » "What happened is not your fault."
 - » Offer to help with grocery shopping, cleaning, food preparation, childcare, etc.
- Continue to stay in contact with the survivor and remember meaningful dates such as birthdays and holidays.

—Marlene Castro

Dynamics of Cold Case Homicide Investigations:

An Interview with Detective Mike Fulton

Resources

If you have information about an unsolved cold case homicides please contact:

Homicide Branch

Major Case/Cold Case Squad

Sgt. Andrew Finkelman

202-645-3356

Unsolved.murder@dc.gov

According to the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) policy, homicide cases are investigated by the assigned detective for a period of four years before they are transferred to the Major Case/Cold Case Unit. A case undergoes a thorough review process to ensure that all possible leads have been carefully investigated and fully exhausted. Family members often have questions and concerns regarding the next step in the process after their loved one's case is transferred to Major Case/Cold Case Unit.

To address these questions we spoke with Detective Michael Fulton who was recently awarded Homicide Detective of the Year for his work to close over 7 cold cases dating back to the early 1980's. In addition to having over 19 years of experience investigating homicide cases, Det. Fulton believes that every family deserves justice for their loved one.

Q: How are Cold Cases reviewed?

A: The majority of cold cases that are assigned for review are the result of a family member calling MPD to request an update. Apart from NOK inquiries, cases are reviewed when tips or new information comes in from the community, an arrestee, a family member, or as a result of advances in forensic technology that can link DNA evidence.

Q: What are some challenges that make older homicide cases difficult to close?

A: Older homicide cases can be difficult to close due to several factors related to the passage of time including: the death of witnesses, difficulty locating evidence, and a person's recall of the incident.

Q: What factors have increased the potential for solvability in cases you have closed?

A: Having witnesses that are reliable and willing to testify, the evolution of social media to elicit information, and family members encouraging the community to come forward all help increase the likelihood of a case closing.

Q: What would you say to family members inquiring about their loved one's unsolved homicide case?

A: I believe the Next of Kin have a right to inquire about the status of their loved one's case no matter how old the case may be. Inquiries from family members are the most common reason that a cold case is assigned to a detective for review.

Q: Is there anything next of kin can do to help increase the likelihood of a case being solved, or to ensure their loved one's case is not forgotten?

A: Witnesses and associates of the decedent are more



likely to share valuable information with a family member or on social media rather than bringing it directly to the police. Family members can play a crucial role in the investigation by reporting new information and encouraging people to come forward. Many Cold cases have been closed as a result of information received on social media and attending memorial events. Additionally, reward flyers and families taking an active role in advocating for justice for their loved one can lead to an arrest.

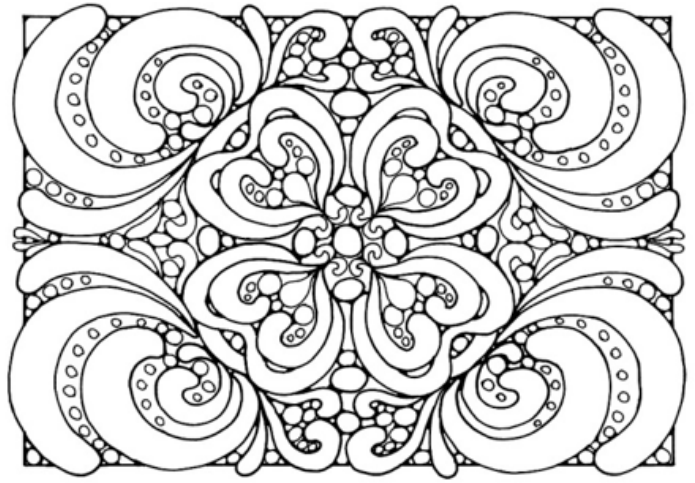
Each year, the MPD's Family Liaison Specialists Unit host a Next-of-Kin Meeting, this year's event was held on June 17th for family members with open homicide cases from 2007. The event provided an opportunity for families to have a personal meeting with a detective to discuss the status of the case. Cold Case-Next of Kin Meetings are dedicated to addressing the needs of those with unsolved/cold case homicides.

—Megan Riley

Adult Coloring Books Can Provide Another Avenue to Cope with Grief

Losing a loved one to homicide can be a challenging and unexpected traumatic event. Many people find solace in being around friends and family at such a difficult time, while others may cope through therapy and grief counseling.

Another useful way to address grief and loss is through an age old pastime once thought for minor children: coloring. Coloring books are no longer just for children. Bringing in a whopping profit since 2012, adult coloring books sales now rival that of children's coloring books according to the CNN study on why adult coloring books are good for you.



CNN's study also highlights the significant health benefits to coloring as well, praising the fun activity as a way to bring about "mindfulness".

For more information about the benefits of coloring,

particularly after a traumatic event, check out www.cnn.com/2016/01/06/health/adult-coloring-books-popularity-mental-health.

For access to free coloring pages to get started, try www.coloring-pages-adults.com.

—Kayce Munyeneh

MPD Special Liaison Branch Fosters Positive Community Policing Relations

Resources

For more information about the MPD Special Liaison Branch you may visit website at <https://mpdc.dc.gov/sld>. The following numbers are also available for contacting specific members of the branch:

Duty on-call phone

- » ALU: (202) 687-3901
- » DHHU: (202) 553-7874
- » LGBT: (202) 506-0714
- » LLU: (202) 498-9829

Please call **911** for all emergencies.

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every person who lives, works, and visits the District. That commitment includes those members of our community who are served by MPD's Special Liaison Branch. The Metropolitan Police Department Special Liaison Branch or the (SLB) is comprised of law enforcement members of the Asian Liaison Unit (ALU), the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHHU), Latino Liaison Unit (LLU), and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Unit (LGBT), and most recently, part-time Victim Services staff. All SLB units are now centrally located at 1369 A Connecticut Avenue, NW, occupying a section

of the SunTrust Bank building in Dupont Circle.

The focus of the specialized branch is to address issues of safety and crime for those populations that feel isolated or may have cultural, language, or other communication barriers. The mission of the SLB is to create, build, strengthen relationship with individuals and groups within the communities we serve by focusing on traditionally underserved communities. We do this through outreach, training and education, and actual response to crimes committed by and against members of the communities we serve. SLB members conduct law enforcement and case follow up. Units also provide home visits to victims of crimes and site visits to mer-

chants and organizations. SLB members also provide safety and crime prevention awareness and referrals to resources through the MPD Victim Services Branch.

The SLB units and their members engage in community policing by fostering positive relations that close the gap between law enforcement and victims and survivors of crime and their families. This unique partnership helps to create wraparound services for victims and also makes the work of the men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department more fulfilling, knowing that the people they work hard to serve are getting the best support they can.

—Helen Hall

Sexual Assault Awareness: 365 Days

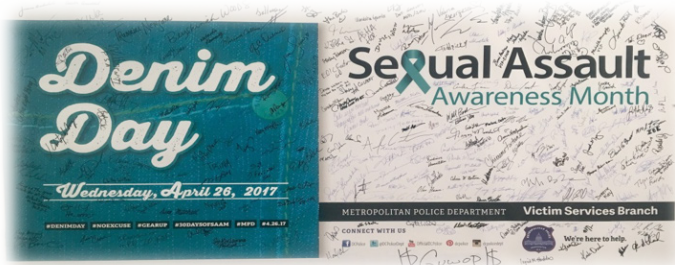
April is National Sexual Assault Awareness month. Each year in April, we stand with survivors, reflect on policy changes and focus on progression towards abolishing the rape culture in our society. This year, Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch (VSB) donning their denim, took to the streets to engage new voices within the community, to stand in solidarity against sexual assault on Denim Day. Over 200 participants came out and signed

a banner as a symbol of their support for sexual assault survivors. Denim Day boasted a host of local talent performing inspirational readings, songs, and spoken word; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. stepped on behalf of Greek life's efforts in engaging new voices concerning sexual assault awareness. MPD's Denim Day campaign was shared over multiple social media platforms utilizing hashtags such as #30DaysofSAAM, #DenimDay, and #NoExcuses in an effort to continue raising awareness, supporting survivors, and actively advocating for the community.

While we observe National Sexual Assault Awareness month in April, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is dedicated to supporting victims of sexual assault 365 days

of the year. MPD's Victim Specialists provide supportive services and referrals to victims and survivors by linking them with wrap-around services that are crucial during the initial period after victimization has occurred. Fortunately, the District of Columbia has a vast array of community resources available to assist victims such as; free sexual assault medical exams (SANE), temporary safe housing, and counseling resources. While many of the services available do require that a police report be filed, there are programs that support self-reporting victims. Should you or someone you know, need assistance locating services and resources, contact MPD's Victim Services Branch at **(202) 727-6007**.

– Ashley Rinaldi



Metropolitan Police Department
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
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