

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

2018 has been purposeful year within the Victim Services Branch at the Metropolitan Police Department. Throughout the year we provided advocacy and education with intent whereby victims and survivors were supported. Our 2019 commitment is to continue to highlight the resources and

entitlements that are available for victims impacted by crime in the District of Columbia. As your ally in the criminal justice victim process, the Victim Services Branch is here with you. Take care and Happy New Year!

James Naome
Ally Child
Stephanie Woods
Kayla Hunsford
Q. Hanks
John Hall
J. Abu Carr
Nyoma Riley
Marlene Cash
Alonso
Frederick

Upcoming Events and Activities



January

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. This month many advocates, organizations, and individuals will come together to increase awareness of human trafficking. Putting an end to human trafficking begins with acknowledging its existence and being able to recognize the signs. Are you or someone you know being trafficked? Is human trafficking happening in your community? To request help or report suspected human trafficking, call National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888** or text "help" to BeFree (233733).

National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM)

Also in January is National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM). The Stalking Resources Center (SRC) of the National Center for Victims of Crime collaborated with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women in acknowledgement of National Stalking Awareness Month. As NSAM approaches its 15th Year of observances, let's all come together to educate our community as well as ourselves about the awareness of "Stalking" and the seriousness of this victimization. If you are interested in obtaining more informa-

tion or need immediate assistance, call the Victim Connect Helpline at **855-4-VICTIM** (855-484-28246) or www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org.

February



Teen Dating Violence is an area of victimization that continues to increase tremendously, according to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence 1.5 million high school students nationwide has experienced physical abuse from a dating partner. There are many resources and campaign initiative established to provide services for our Teen Dating Victims, so if you or someone you know are a victim of Teen Dating.... please reach out to National Dating Abuse Helpline **1-866-331-9474**, text "loveis" to **22522**, or log on to the interactive website, loveisrespect.org, and receive immediate, confidential assistance.

April

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) will lead many communities throughout the country as they have done the past years in April for their annual observances of Na-

tional Crime Victims' Right Week (NCVRW) with a weeklong initiative that promotes victims' rights and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. The theme for NCVRW 2019 is "Honoring Our Past, Creating Hope for the Future." For additional information visit <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>.

Every April since the late 1980s, Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) has been acknowledged, however it was not until April 1, 2001 that the U.S. first observed it nationally. A host of agencies and organizations support and embrace the task to end sexual assault and have participated in several activities and campaigns over the years. If you would like to get involved, need help, or know individuals who may need help contact: The National Sexual Violence Resource Center at www.nsvrc.org. Further, contact the MPD Victim Services Branch at www.mpd.gov or (202) **724-4339** to learn more about MPD's activities for SAAM.

—Dawn Christie



Stalking in the Digital Age

Resources

For tech safety tips, visit the FTC blog site or the National Network to End Domestic Violence Technology Safety site (<https://nnedv.org/content/safety-net>). Additional information on stalking can be found at the Stalking Resource Center (202-467-8700).

In honor of National Stalking Awareness Month, we at the Victim Services Branch (VSB) of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) wanted to take this opportunity to share some useful information about Stalking especially as it relates to technology.

First, while legal definitions of stalking vary from one jurisdiction to another, a good working definition of stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2014).

Before modern technology was adapted in a way that

could be exploited for monitoring and intimidating, the effort that stalkers exerted was mostly physical. The bulk of stalking was carried out by bombarding the victim with unwanted calls, sending threatening letters and unwanted gifts, watching them, or repeatedly going to places the stalker expected them to be.

In cases of escalated stalking activity, the perpetrator threatened to harm pets, photographed the victim without their knowledge, or compromised the safety of their victim's vehicle. Getting in-depth information about the victim was difficult, and using it in a way that could destroy their

life was not as straightforward.

Those days are gone. While the examples mentioned above are disconcerting, technology has exponentially compounded the danger victims face. Technology-assisted stalking has forced victims into a position where they cannot hide from the aggressor. Perpetrators are now able to track, eavesdrop, record, watch, intimidate, and shame victims without leaving home. Even worse, an increasing number of tech companies offer spyware to the public for stealth monitoring.

—Beyshinah Woods

'Safety' on the Road During the Holidays

Resources

You can find more information on the AAA website at https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/driving-advice/holiday-road-trip-travel-tips/#.W_MtM-suWzDA

The America Automobile Association or AAA as we know it provides suggestions for maintaining you and your family safe during Holiday Road Trips. Are you and your family planning to drive to a holiday get-together this year? Whether you're heading to Grandma's cottage or a favorite vacation spot to celebrate holidays with family or friends, AAA has simple tips to help make your drive a smooth one, so you can arrive at your destination safely and without incident.

» Ensure your vehicle is properly maintained. If

maintenance is not up to date, have your car and tires inspected before you take a long drive.

- » Map your route in advance and be prepared for busy roads during the most popular times of the year. If possible, consider leaving earlier or later to avoid heavy traffic.
- » Keep anything of value in the trunk or covered storage area.
- » If you're traveling with children, remind them not to talk to strangers. Go with them on bathroom breaks and give them whistles to be used only if the family

gets separated.

- » Have roadside assistance contact information on hand, in case an incident occurs on the road.
- » In case of an emergency, keep a cell phone and charger with you at all times. AAA and many other companies offer smartphone applications that enable motorists to request help without making a phone call.

With a little prep, you can leave the road-trip stress at home and enjoy your holiday with family and friends.

—Helen Hall

Next of Kin Meeting: Making a Difference

During the week of October 1-5, 2018, 46 family members with open homicide cases for 2017-2018 met with the Detective assigned to their loved one's case. Families attend Next-of-Kin meetings for several reasons: to receive updates on the investigation, to engage the Criminal Justice Process, to honor their loved one, and to receive supportive services from a Victim Specialist. October's Next-of-Kin Meeting provided an opportunity for families to receive information on Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). It also provided an opportunity for families to take part in the "#1Thing" campaign to end domestic violence within their community. Families dedicated their "#1Thing" to honor the memory of their loved one. Join us at one of our upcoming NOK Meetings in 2019.

—Megan Riley

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Resources

For a detailed list of Domestic Violence Resources, please visit <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/domestic-violence-resources> or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** (SAFE).

It's a startling fact that every year, millions of children witness domestic violence in the US. While many parents believe that children are not aware of what is going on, children absorb abuse. Children are not only aware that abuse is occurring, but the effects of Domestic Violence manifests in physical, mental, and emotional signs and symptoms throughout their lives. According to Dr. Sandra A. Graham-Bermann, Director of the Child and Violence Trauma Lab, "The impact of Childhood Domestic Violence can be life-long in terms of physical and mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and traumatic stress, difficulty in relationships with others, academic and employment failures, and trouble parenting" (<https://cdv.org>, 2018). Children may experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and learning disabilities. Domestic Violence

affects the way children learn to cope with the world around them as they get older; limiting their coping skills to typically destructive behaviors.

Aside from physical and mental health problems, Domestic Violence increases children's percentages of engaging in harmful practices such as:

- » Juvenile Delinquency;
- » Suicide;
- » Drug and Alcohol Abuse;
- » Violent Crime;
- » And they are more likely to repeat the cycle of Domestic Violence in adulthood-either as victims or perpetrators.

The good news is that you are not alone; there is help available for families that are experiencing Domestic Violence. The Crime Victims Compensation Program can assist victims with counseling



expenses, temporary emergency shelter options, and moving expenses. Counseling resources such as The Wendt Center and Paving The Way, provide trauma-informed and grief counseling to children and adults dealing with Domestic Violence. Victims of Domestic Violence are encouraged to obtain a Civil Protection Order (CPO) against abusers. A CPO is a court order issued by a judge, in efforts to protect the victim from the abuser for a term of one year, which may be extended for safety reasons.

—Ashley Rinaldi

The Power of Affirmations!

Resources

For more information about affirmations and ways to create successful affirmations, check out <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/smart-relationships/201403/affirmations-the-why-what-how-and-what-if>

A traumatic event can change everything in the lives of the victim and the lives of the family of the victim. The sense of normalcy morphs into a new normal that can include fears of revictimization or the grief of loss. Whether you have been the victim of violent crime or lost a loved one due to homicide, there are several techniques and practices people use to get to a healthy place. The Victim Services Branch has shared articles and information on the importance of counseling, coloring and self-care. If you have found any of those methods or

tools to be successful, you may also benefit from affirmations.

Positive affirmations are statements designed to combat negative thinking and retrain the subconscious mind. They are a psychological tool used to counteract negative beliefs, thoughts, and self-talk. They are used in every walk of life including sports, career development, and especially in helping victims of violent crime. Kathryn Lively from Psychology Today provides some context for understanding positive affirmations. She states, "According to Walter E. Jacobson, M.D., there is value in affirmations of this because

our subconscious mind plays a major role in the actualization of our lives and the manifestation of our desires. What we believe about ourselves at a subconscious level, he says, can have a significant impact on the outcome of events." Recent studies have also shown that affirmations can be used to "buffer stress."

—Kayce Munyeneh

11th Annual Tree of Remembrance

Resources

For more information contact the Victim Services Branch at (202) 724-4339 or (202) 645-6363.

On Saturday, December 1st, 2018, the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch coordinated its Annual Tree of Remembrance Program. This is an event that many families look forward to every year. The special event is dedicated to the family members of homicide victims in the District. This year we thought it would be beneficial to provide attendees more time to connect with one another. So we opened our doors thirty minutes early and carved out time in the program for families to fellowship.

"Key to Healing" was not just the theme for the event but also served as a reminder to each person that they possess a unique key inside that allows them to forge on and find hope. We wanted survivors to know that they each hold a key deep within their souls that allows them to navigate the road to healing.

More importantly, we wanted to create a safe space for survivors to share their stories and experiences with

one another. For years, the Tree of Remembrance event has provided that space for the families. We recognize that healing is an inside job. No one has the right or the ability to dictate what that process should look like.

Here are a few keys that you may be holding onto that can help others through the healing process:

Keys to Healing:

1. No one can take away your memories.

Hold on to and cherish the memories of your loved one. Remembering can help with healing, bring joyful feelings, and help with feeling whole again.

2. Never underestimate the power of connectedness.

Allow yourself to be vulnerable and connect to people that feel safe. There is something special that takes place in a relationship when you realize that the other person can actually relate to your feelings and experiences. That bond and relationship can potentially be the key to moving forward in your healing journey.

3. Healing is a process and you get to move at your own pace.

A major key in your healing process is allowing yourself to feel what you feel. It is your process! It is not a timed race.

Do not allow anyone to tell you how long it should take.

—Tiarra Abu-Bakr



Healing Keys

HEALING IS A JOURNEY that continues across a lifetime. Though we may never be completely healed, we will be forever changed.

WE EACH POSSESS A KEY deep within our souls. Your key is unique and allows you to forge on and find hope even in the most difficult circumstances in life.

WHAT IS THE KEY that you carry with you on your healing journey?

CAN YOU SHARE THAT KEY with other survivors to give them hope as they search for their key along their healing journey?



My key to healing is ...

Dealing with Loss During the Holidays

Resources

For more information and resources, visit <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/victim-assistance>

Globally, people are trained to reserve the holiday season for their loved ones.

For most people, this time of the year brings joy, closeness, and the comfort of family. But what happens when you have experienced the loss of a close family member or friend? The holiday season can become a very painful time of the year. That pain may present differently for everyone. However, it is important to understand that your feelings are normal. Some people feel bad because they thought they were further along in the grieving process but remember grief is not linear. It is a cycle and there are some inevitable situations that may resemble day one of your loss. You are allowed to grieve

on your terms and that may look different for you than it does for someone else.

Some people are unable to cope with the memories of sticking to the holiday traditions that were created with the person they lost. You get to recreate what the holiday season looks like. Setting realistic expectations will be beneficial in helping you through the season. If being with family provides a great deal of grief this year; be kind to yourself and spend the day with a friend. That does not mean indefinitely give up sharing this time with family but if you are not ready this year, it's ok.

A few additional tips that may help you through the holiday season; allow yourself to feel the range of emo-

tions as they come, surround yourself with people who love and support you, and don't be afraid to let people know that you are struggling.

It could be liberating to find new ways to honor your loved one, some suggestions may include:

- » prepare their favorite food
- » create a memory box with photos, notes, and drawings from family members and friends
- » play their favorite song or movie
- » create a sacred space in the home

Over all do what feels right for you!

—Tiarra Abu-Bakr



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