Message from Tyria Fields

This past year has undoubtedly been one of challenges, loss, and unpredictability. It has forced us to rethink and maybe even show a greater appreciation for the smallest things. Collectively we have grown to become a stronger resilient community. We have learned to move in ways that were never thought of before. As we continue to meander our way through this pandemic, Spring is here to once again encourage us to renew relationships, refresh our minds and continue moving toward greater opportunities. Celebrated April 19-23, 2021, this year’s theme for National Crime Victims Rights Week: Support Victims – Build Trust. Engage Communities-reinforces casess to enhance collaborative relationships and support empowered survivors even more. Please let us know how we can be of service to you. The Metropolitan Police Department is here to help.
I have experienced gun violence then you already know that one bullet has so much power to cause damage in many ways. I want to share a few ways of how individuals, families and communities are negatively impacted by gun violence. I also want to share how specific forms of therapy can be useful in addressing the harmful effects of gun violence. Family, friends, relationships, dreams and one’s potential die when a person is killed. For those who survive, as well as their families, friends and the community the following areas of harm are often ignored:

- Mentally: flashbacks of the incident, nightmares, inability to concentrate, think straight, jumpy, worried
- Emotionally: anger, fear, depression, suicidality
- Socially: inability to trust people who care about making the world a better place, there have been individuals advocating for sexual assault prevention. In the United States, movements for social change and equality began to gain traction in the 1970s and 50s with the civil rights era. Although open discussion of the realities of sexual assault and domestic violence were limited at these times, activists for equal rights began to challenge the status quo.

Efforts during this time were championed by Black women and women of color. Advocates like Rosa Parks worked at the intersections of race-based and gender-based violence (a framework that years later in 1989, advocate and Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw would call “intersectionality”). Wide social activism around the issue of sexual assault continued into the 1970s, bringing with it support for survivors and heightened awareness. The first rape crisis center was founded in San Francisco in 1971, the same city where the first U.S. Take Back the Night event was held seven years later. Additionally, the DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC) was founded in 1972 as one of the first rape crisis centers in the country. No legislation existed that protected the needs of survivors or defended bodily autonomy as a basic right. DCRCC pioneered the way—using street theater, lobbying for legislation and government funding, peer-to-peer support, community partnerships, and a home run hotline manned by volunteer community members.

The following decades mobilized survivors and advocates to call for legislation and funding that would support survivors, such as the Violence Against Women Act of 1993 (VAWA). Monumental changes like VAWA demonstrated that national efforts promoting sexual violence prevention were needed. Even before SAAM was first nationally observed in 2001, advocates had been holding events, marches, and observances related to sexual violence during the month of April, sometimes during a week-long “Sexual Assault Awareness Week.” In an effort to further coordinate awareness and prevention efforts, in 2000, the newly launched National Sexual Violence Resource Center and the Resource Sharing Project polled sexual violence coalitions. The results showed that those in the movement preferred a teal ribbon as a symbol for sexual assault awareness, and SAAM as we know it was born.

—Bayasrah Woods

NCVRW 2021 Focuses on Building Trust and Engaging Communities

National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (NCVRW) will be observed April 18-24. This year’s theme, “Support Victims-Build Trust-Engage Communities” emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to help victims of crime. Since 1988, NCVRW is a time to renew our commitment to serving all victims of crime, to acknowledge the achievements in victim services and allied professions, to honor those who have gone above and beyond in their service to others, and to remember crime victims and survivors.

The MPD Victim Services Branch is recognizing NCVRW in our April “Now You Know” Round Table. Our featured guest is Assistant Chief Leslie Parsons, Investigative Services Bureau, who addresses how we honor each of those tenets in service to our community. In discussing “Support Victims and Build Trust,” Chief Parsons relates that “Every dispatched call and every citizen contact is an opportunity to build trust with individuals of the community.” To further “Engage Communities,” the Baller Brigade will kick off during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Baller Brigade, a socially distant unexpected engagement with the youth provides a relationship building experience for the community with our MPD officers who patrol their neighborhoods through sports. For any questions, please contact Sharon Daugherty, Community Outreach Coordinator, Victim Services Branch, MPD at sharon.daugherty@dc.gov

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—Sharon Daugherty

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) recognizes the importance of forging strong relationships with underserved and marginalized communities. These communities face many barriers when communicating with law enforcement. Many in these communities may lack trust in law enforcement due to past negative experiences in their country of origin. Language barriers and immigration status can also play a role. MPD is committed to working with these communities by breaking the language barriers and ensuring that the Department is equipped with Spanish-speaking officers and staff to assist citizens in their native language. The Department’s Latino Liaison Unit focuses on the public safety needs of the Latino Community. The officers assigned to this Unit conduct community outreach to solidify police relations.

The Latino Liaison Unit participates in events that target the District’s Latino community. They take part in events hosted by community-based organizations and churches. During Pandemic, the Department collaborated with other community agencies and held numerous outdoor outreach activities. The Department gathered at different locations throughout the city to provide food and hot meals distribution, pop-up coats drives, toy distribution, drive-by birthday celebrations, pop-up coffee shops, as well as information on how to stay safe during the pandemic.

Additionally, MPD’s Victim Services Branch supports victims of crime by providing information about their rights, resources, and available services to help victims and survivors cope with the aftermath of a crime. Victim Specialists work one on one with victims of crime and serve as a liaison with the detectives and other agencies. Furthermore, VSB engages commuters to help build trust through our outreach program. As we transition into this new normal, the Victim Services Branch continues to provide victims and survivors with supportive services.

—Marlene Castro

For more information call the Victim Services Branch at (202) 645-6363 or email victim.services@dc.gov.

For information on the Latino Liaison Unit, visit https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/latino-liaison-unit.

Resources

Community support can make a difference for survivors of human trafficking.

Stronger Together.
Unite to uplift victims.

Juntos somos más fuertes.
Unámonos para ayudar a las víctimas.

Empower!
Giving Victims and Their Families a Voice
Letters & Kudos

Agencies Align to Bring Joy

Dear Ms. Daugherty,

Community Family Life Services (CFLS) is so grateful for your help in getting the word out to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) about our Adopt-a-Family Holiday Program. It was a hard year for many, and the MPD’s generosity helped CFLS provide gifts to 150 needy women and families in Washington, DC to make their holiday seasons brighter and happier.

CFLS’ mission is to support women returning home following a period of incarceration with targeted, continuous services. The MPD’s generosity provided more than gifts to open when there would have been little else — it provided grateful families the opportunity to be momentarily free of worry in this joyous season.

The MPD’s donations also helped CFLS continue to provide the resources and tools our clients need to rebuild their lives—to regain stability, self-sufficiency and move towards self-actualization. Our work would not be possible without the generous support of partners like you and the MPD. Together, we are empowering justice-involved women in the District of Columbia.

Please share our thanks with the employees of the MPD for being a part of the CFLS family!

Sincerely,

—Ashley McSwain, LGSW, MSOD
Executive Director

RISE Project Provides Free Support for Families of Homicide, Victims of Hate Crime

Under the RISE Project, Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC) provides no cost rights enforcement legal services to all crime victims in the District of Columbia with a focus on surviving family members of homicide, victims of hate crimes, and survivors of gender-based violence. In support of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (NCVRW), Next of Kin were provided information on how to access the RISE project through our MPD Victim Services Branch’s Family Liaison Specialists Unit.

As the next of kin, you may have rights during the criminal justice process, including the investigation of your loved one’s case. If you have questions about your rights as next of kin, or want to learn more about these rights, Network for Victim Recovery of DC may be able to help! NVRDC can provide a free legal consultation, during which an attorney can speak with you about the questions you have.

To access NVRDC’s attorneys for brief advice services please email RISE@nvrdc.org or call NVRDC at (202) 742-1727. Choose option 7 for “Brief Advice Clinic.” All of NVRDC’s services are completely free. You can also contact NVRDC by going to our website: https://www.nvrdc.org/get-help

—Sharon Daugherty

Empower!
GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE