

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Summer 2020 | Volume 12, Issue 2

Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

During this time of uncertainty and in the midst of a pandemic, we are forced to consider the way of getting things done. These developments required an intense look at our advocacy efforts and demanded new ways to stay connected. We too were faced to create new normals.

I am pleased to share that the Victim Services Branch while working remotely has found new ways to enhance our services to victims and survivors of crime in the District of Columbia. Using technology and innovation our outreach and advocacy efforts have actually soared. We are engaging with families in ways that were

never imagined. No matter what challenges and obstacles come our way, our mission remains the same — We are here to help. This pandemic has really pushed us and we responded.

Upcoming Events and Activities

August

The Safe Sisters Circle & Unifi Food Drive and Bookbag Give Away

Monday, August 24 1 pm
The Hive 2.0 at the bottom of the Anacostia Arts Center
RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/e/the-safe-sisters-circle-and-unifi-food-drive-and-bookpack-giveaway-tickets-114494795014 Participants of the Give Away can sign up for a time in 10-minute increments (to ensure social distancing standards)
Contact info@safesisterscircle.org or call (202) 596-5209

September

PSA 702 Outreach Committee Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, September 8 2 pm
Virtual meeting via Zoom
Contact brendarichardson724@gmail.com

House of Ruth Kidspace Grand Opening

September 30 2 pm
2910 Pennsylvania Ave SE.
Contact [Elizabeth Kiker](mailto:EKiker@houseofruth.org), Development Director at EKiker@houseofruth.org or (202) 597-5803

October

What to Expect After Conviction: Resources for Crime Victim Family Members

October 8 1 pm
Webinar (open to all, free of charge) sponsored by Healing Justice (healingjusticeproject.org) and survivor-services.org
Contact [Kristina Rose](mailto:krrose@healingjusticeproject.org) at krrose@healingjusticeproject.org

This webinar will provide an overview of new post-conviction resources created for crime survivors and murder victim family members, made possible through a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime. Included in these resources are individual peer-to-peer support videos featuring the voices of survivors, as well as sample policies and suggested guidelines for victim advocates, police, and prosecutors.

Ongoing

DCAEHS, Inc., is very thankful for the opportunities to help our Communities! We are a Community Pastor, so if the community needs to have a Virtual Service for the loss of a loved one, we are available with no charge and we can assist them through the process.

DC Alliance Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc.

All Survivors from any Violence, including Coronavirus - "Prayer Helpline Support Team"
Daily Seven Days a Week 7 am–10 pm
Teleconference Line - **240-988-3483**
(Must leave your Prayer Request ALL calls will be returned)

DC Alliance Pastoral Care Spiritual Worship Services

Spiritual Care Worship Church Service
Every Sunday
Seniors 10–11 am, 11 am–12 pm, 1:30–2:30 pm
Homeless Women 12:30–1:30 pm
Homeless Men 3–4 pm
Teleconference Line **1-605-313-5152**
Code **831776**

DC Alliance Pastoral Care Chaplaincy Training Session

Teleconference Training Session on "Prayer"
Thursday, August, 27 7:30–9 pm
Thursday, September 24 7:30–9 pm
Teleconference Line **1-605-313-5152**
Code **831776**

PLEASE NOTE:

For all DCAEHS events, please contact **Pastor Patricia Saunders**, CEO, at (240) 899-4669 or Minister Mathis at lorry5420@gmail.com

—Sharon Daugherty

Spotlight on the 'Safe Sisters Circle' Advocacy Organization

Resources

For more information, visit safesisterscircle.org or call (202) 596-5209.



The Safe Sisters Circle is a relatively new organization based in the heart of Anacostia. Its mission is to provide culturally specific, trauma-informed, and holistic services to Black women survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault living primarily, but not exclusively, in Wards 7 and 8. Its goal is to become a staple resource in the East of the River community.

Through its East of the River Women's Legal Services Project, The Safe Sisters Circle has been providing pro bono

legal services for women and those who identify as women survivors of domestic, sexual, and physical violence for two years now. Founder Alana C. Brown founded her mission on advocacy for Black women but invites all women survivors to come to its safe space. "All women, regardless of race or ethnicity, are invited. This is a safe space for all survivors to receive support, be empowered, and to connect with other survivors in their community," says Brown.



For more information regarding legal services and/or the upcoming Food Drive and Bookbag Giveaway, (see under events listing) please contact info@safesisterscircle.org or call (202) 596-5209.

—Alana C. Brown, Esq.

Next of Kin Meeting: Making a Difference

This year's Annual Cold Case Next-of-Kin Meeting looked different, but the commitment and services remain the same. This event provided families of 2010 open homicide cases an opportunity to participate in the 10th year review of their loved one's case. Detectives from the Major Case/Cold Case Unit provided case updates via telephone with the option to meet in person at a later date. As part of the investigative and review process, Reward Posters were updated to seek new information from the community.

Members of the Victim Services Branch (VSB) provided information and supportive services to empower survivors as they navigate the Criminal Justice System. VSB partnered with the Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC) RISE Project to provide legal information to the next-of-kin on the Crime Victims' Rights Act. For more information on upcoming Next-of-Kin meetings, or to inquire about resources for homicide survivors, please contact the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363.

NVRDC can provide a free, brief legal consultation to answer some of the questions that you may have on victims' rights. For more information, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpqNsTmAKkA

—Megan Riley

Introducing the 'Now You Know' Round Table

Look for our links to the future Now You Know Round Tables in upcoming newsletters and Listserv mailings. We look forward to growing our audience and bringing you the topics and answers you most need to know.

Dynamic outreach event MPD Victim Services Branch is hosting online is the new series "Now You Know Round Table." Our topics cover issues related to victims of crime and services and are interwoven with stories of hope. Guests are from DC victim provider agencies and within MPD. Our goal is to strengthen our community relationships and increase victims' awareness of access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Now You Know Round Table (April)
<https://youtu.be/swlbpR14ryM>

The inaugural April Now

You Know Round Table guest panel included:

- » **Indira Henard** — DC Rape Crisis Center
- » **Erin Pollitt** — DC Forensic Nurse Examiners
- » **Aisha Ivey-Nixon** — Crime Victims Compensation Program
- » **Carla Okonkwo** — Family Liaison Specialists Unit, Victim Services Branch (MPD)
- » **Tramaine Newsome**, Victim Specialist Unit, Major Case Victims Unit, Victim Services Branch (MPD)

Topics covered services during COVID 19 and beyond with a value packed agenda

of information. The focus was on survivors, victims and the general community with vital information should they need our services, covering homicide support, Next of Kin meetings, the Crime Victims Compensation application process, how MPD Victim specialists continue to provide services, the role of Forensic Nurses, kit tracking, and strategies for survivors in these challenging times. The community was given insight into how we all partner to provide a seamless response for victims of crime year round.

We wrapped up the pro-

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Paint with MPD Continues to Be a Success

Resources

- » Casa Ruby Emergency Hotline: (202) 355-5155 <https://casaruby.org>
- » ArtReach GW at THEARC (202) 819-5490 <https://serve.gwu.edu/art-reach-gw>

We are fortunate to have established strong relationships and ongoing commitments with ArtReach GW and Casa Ruby. When COVID-19 restrictions occurred, Victim Services Branch MPD transformed our original in-person art event to occur online. We wanted to recognize Pride and honor the inner strengths of the youth at Casa Ruby. This experience gave us all a chance to spend time together in a fun/relaxed setting, build relationships, & get to know each other.

Sharon Daugherty, Community Outreach Coordinator, Victim Services Branch, MPD, and ArtReach GW Director, **Aselin Flowers** with Art Therapist, **Rebeca Carvajal**, teleconferenced with staff and residents of Casa Ruby (a multicultural, bilingual, LGBTQ safe space providing food, shelter, and numerous other health-related services) to create the "Paint with MPD" online event.

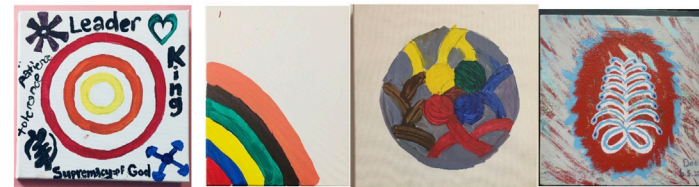
Adinkra symbols of West Africa were offered as a guide to begin their artistic journey. They drew and painted what resonated within each of them. Inner strength was the theme. As we progressed, residents spoke about what their symbols meant and strengths they discovered within. At the

end, each person presented and described their artwork:

- » Supremacy of God, leader, patience, tolerance, King
- » This is so dope
- » Positive energy, I can have fluid emotions but my core is solid
- » Protest
- » Heartbroken but the light never goes out
- » Endurance, Resilience
- » The stars are my future. We are and life is beautiful in its natural form

Sharing this time together was a powerful and inspiring experience. This will resonate for years to come as they look back and realize they were able to find their own inner strengths at a most precarious time in history.

—Sharon Daugherty



Introducing the 'Now You Know' Round Table

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gram with messages of inspiring hope, such as "There is no higher honor than to be able to bear witness and hold space for someone else's healing journey."

Now You Know Round Table (May)
<https://youtu.be/q4GUAMrqXz8>

The May Now You Know Round Table panel included:

- » **Dr. Mechelle Haywood** — Ascensions Psychological and Community Services
- » **Pastor Patricia Saunders** — DC Pastoral Alliance Care Chaplaincy Program
- » **Kisha Allure** — Casa Ruby
- » **Sergeant Nicole Brown** — Special Liaison Branch, LGBT Liaison Unit (MPD)

We recognized May as Mental Health Awareness Month. May's Round Table addresses the realities of living

with mental health issues; and strategies for attaining mental health and wellness. Our topics were about grief in the reality of COVID with various coping mechanisms suggested. Support groups, prayer hotlines and other resources were discussed as well as a resource page being provided.

In May, we also recognize our LGBTQ Community's diversity. Throughout the year, a number of days and weeks are designated to recognize the unique identities and challenges experienced by members of the LGBTQ community. In this Round Table we discussed barriers our local LGBTQ community experiences and how we all work together to provide services for our vulnerable neighbors.

Know You Know Round Table (July)

This panel included:

- » **Yunfei (Kay) Gibb** — Special Liaison Branch, MPD

» **Sr. Officer Jason N. Medina**, Seasoned Citizens Outreach Officer, Patrol Service South (6D) MPD

This episode highlighted some of the wide-ranging outreach MPD provides to our community. As Officer Medina put it, "Outreach includes prevention." Collaborations with World Central Kitchen, Fair Girls, Code 3 and the Project Hope exemplify our diligent work to deliver what our citizens need most. Mentoring children to working with human trafficking victims, to reaching into their pockets to assist exemplify the work encompassed in outreach. Panelists also covered the issues that the Asian population faces in living in America and how specific outreach is needed more than ever to bridge the gap of understanding vastly different cultures.

—Sharon Daugherty

Dealing With Grief and Loss During COVID-19 Pandemic

Resources

For information and resources on grief and loss support groups contact the Victim Services Branch at **(202) 724-4339** or **(202) 645-6363**.

As we get used to new guidelines of Stay at Home orders and social distancing, many survivors of homicide victims have to rethink the way they plan funeral services for their loved ones. These survivors have had to mourn the loss of their sons, daughter, sisters brothers, mothers, fathers, and friends in isolation.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), grief is a normal response to loss during or after a disaster or any other traumatic event. There are several common reactions to grief such as shock, disbelief, denial, anxiety, anger, sadness, and loss of sleep or appetite. For some, these reactions are

delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, many people have been unable to say goodbye to their loved ones, attend funeral services, participate in different rituals, and comfort each other. Funerals and other rituals are an important part of the grief process and dealing with loss. COVID-19 has forced many to cope with grief and loss while being in quarantine thus prolonging the grief and healing process.

To better cope with grief and loss during this pandemic The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends:

» Staying connected with family and friends through conference calls, sharing

memories, pictures, and stories

- » Creating rituals such as planting a tree and cooking your loved ones favorite meal
- » Seeking help from faith leaders, friends, grief counselors, and support groups that are available online or over the phone
- » Focus on the present on those areas of your life that you have control over right now

For more information on how to deal with grief and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, go to www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/stress-coping/grief-loss.html

—Marlene Castro



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