Message from 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.

Email us at victim.services@dc.gov

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
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, 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 survivorservices.org)
Contact Kristina Rose at krose@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 - 240-888-3483

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 (202) 597-5803 or Minister Mathis at lorri5420@gmail.com

—Sharon Daugherty
Spotlight on the ‘Safe Sisters Circle’ Advocacy Organization

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 we’ve loved their one case. Details 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, Waiver 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=4pEvXaVZIAA

Introducing the ‘Now You Know’ Round Table

A dynamic outreach event MPD Victim Services Branch is hosting online is the 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 victim’s awareness of access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Now You Know Round Table (April)
https://youtu.be/5xpy1B1Y9M

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 that should be needed to our services, covering compassionate 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.

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.

Paint with MPD Continues to Be a Success

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, Austin Flowers with Art Therapist, Rebecca Carvajal. Teresa was 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 their artwork:

- Supremacy of God, leader, patience, tolerance, King
- This is so dope, 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.

~Sharon Daugherty

Resources
- Casa Ruby Emergency Hotline: (202) 355-5155
  https://casaruby.org
- ArtReach GW at THEARC: (202) 819-5490
  https://serv.gov/aurartreach
- Alana C. Brown, Esq.

Introducing the ‘Now You Know’ Round Table

Continued from page 2

The May Now You Know Round Table panel included:

- Dr. Michelle Haywood — Asst. Psychiatrist and Community Services
- Pastor Patricia Saunders — DC Pastoral Alliance Care Chaplaincy Program
- Kisha Allere — Casa Ruby
- Sergeant Nicole Brown — Special Liaison Branch, LGBT Liaison Unit (MPD)

We recognized May as Mental Health Awareness Month. May’s Round Table theme was ‘Pride’ and we discussed barriers our local 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’s diversity and how we all work together to provide services for our vulnerable neighborhoods.

Know You Know Round Table (July)
https://youtu.be/tGQUAmSL13G

This panel included:

- Yunnel (Kay) Gibb — Special Liaison Branch, MPD
- Sonya Johnson — LGBT Liaison Unit (MPD)
- Rebeca Carvajal

We discussed the importance of mental health and healing. Our topics were about grief in the re-creation 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 to our local LGBTQ community’s diversity and how we all work together to provide services for our vulnerable neighborhoods.

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Dealing With Grief and Loss During COVID-19 Pandemic

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


—Marlene Castro

Resources

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

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