U nfortunately tragedy is among us. Yet, advocacy and hope are with us. True to the mission of the Metropolitan Police Department, we are here to help. With resources and tools for self-empowerment and education, our office helps to increase engagement and participation with the criminal justice system. Our goal is to help survivors gain access to information necessary to understand the aftermath of a victimization. We ensure victims’ rights are protected and work to improve the quality of life of citizens and visitors of the District of Columbia impacted by crimes.

Tyria Fields

Upcoming Events and Activities

ON GOING

DC Alliance Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc. (DCAEHS, Inc.) Pastoral Care Chaplaincy Program
Is offering a Holiday Prayer Helpline. You don’t have to go through your grief and loneliness alone, our professional staff is waiting to hear from you. Please tell your family and friends about this holiday free service for Elderly, Adults & Teens. Your call will be returned the same day or no later than the next day. When: December 19, 2019 – February 28, 2020 - 7am - 11pm

Contact: Pastor Patricia Saunders, Executive Director - 240-988-3483 revpatriciasaunders@gmail.com www.dcaehs.org

PSA 702 Outreach Committee Meeting at the 7th District Police Station Tuesday, December 10, 2019 (Second Tuesday of each month) 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm 2455 Alabama Avenue, SE

Contact: Brenda Richardson brendarichardson724@gmail.com 202.678.1978

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & FAMILY LEGAL CLINICS
being provided free through the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project. Do you need help with your protection order, divorce, custody or immigration case? Our lawyers offer free legal assistance for victims of domestic violence and caregivers of at-risk children. Call (202) 425-4753 for dates & times. Free legal assistance for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault & stalking at our court-based clinic for practitioners only. Call 202-349-0082 for dates & times. clinic@dcvlp.org www.dcvlp.org/clinic

DC Families for Safe Streets
confronts traffic violence in DC through advocacy and support. Group members offer peer support to each other. Participants are those who have been impacted by traffic violence (car crashes) either through the loss of a loved one in a crash, or as survivors or caretakers themselves. The next “In person” peer support meeting to be announced. We offer a private, online community, accessible through Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/ SafeStreetsDCSupport/?source_id=361869944534227)

Contact: DCFamiliesForSafeStreets@gmail.com or (202) 642-9256

January
Stalking Awareness Month is an annual call to action to recognize and respond to the serious crime of stalking. “Stalking: Know it – Name It – Stop It” will be the powerful social media campaign you can join. It is critical to raise the issue of stalking as its own form of gender-based violence as well as a crime that frequently predicts and co-occurs with physical and sexual violence. Go to www.stalkingawareness.org/stalking-awareness-month for the endless ways you can post & support this campaign.

February
Teen Dating Violence Month recognizes that dating violence is more common than many people think. One in three teens in the U.S. will experience physical, sexual or emotional abuse by someone they are in a relationship with before they become adults. Help spread awareness and stop dating abuse before it starts! Go to www.loveisrespect.org/teenendmonth to share information with your teens.

April
The goal of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is to raise public awareness about sexual harassment, abuse, and assault and educate communities on how to prevent it. The theme, “I Ask” explores the importance of consent in healthy relationships and empowers everyone to put it into practice. www.nsvrc.org/saam

SAAM Day of Action April 7th – Wear Blue to show your support for survivors of sexual assault: #SAAMDayOAction #metoo

Every April, Office for Victims of Crime helps lead communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (NCVRW) from April 19–25. This year’s theme is Seek Justice | Ensure Victims’ Rights | Inspire Hope. The weeklong initiative promotes victims’ rights and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/nccrvw

Join us for Denim Day! On April 29, 2020, millions of people across the world will wear jeans with a purpose, support survivors, and educate themselves and others about all forms of sexual violence. #denimday www.denimdayinfo.org/

The Metropolitan Police Department will host Next-of-Kin meetings for immediate family for unsolved homicide cases. For more information call 202-845-6363

—Sharon Daugherty
During this time, it is alright to do things differently. You may try enjoying small gatherings with close friends and family rather than get-togethers with a large group of people. Set realistic expectations for yourself. Trust that grief is part of the healing process and give yourself time. Drawing comfort by considering making a donation or gift in the memory of your loved one by giving to others is one way to uncover feelings of joy. Invite a guest who might otherwise be alone during the holiday season. Honor your loved through candle lighting, a moment of silence or reciting a poem in your loved one's honor.

Lastly, and most importantly, take good care of yourself. At first, simply focus on the basics—eating proper nutrition and getting plenty of rest, sleep, and exercise. Avoid alcohol to self-medicate your moods and turn instead to healthy activities like meditation, bubble baths, or writing in a journal as an outlet for your grief. If you or your loved one needs help, consider seeking assistance with grief counseling, grief support groups, or inpatient programs. You may find the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing helpful at this time of year. See our website for more information or call (202) 624-0010 or (202) 610-0086.

—Helen Hall

We don’t ever ask for this name. It’s sometimes not right for even a decision to claim this title. It’s what we become, slowly over time. We’re simply surviving at first and even then it doesn’t feel like it. We’re just trying to find our way through. We find the strength among us and keep holding on. Then the pain opens up to others’ pain… an acute awareness of the human condition that everyone is finding their own way. We find each other, hold each other up, and wait in the storm with each other. After a while, someone says they’ve gained a measure of light from something we’ve said, done or even haven’t done. It was right for them at that moment. You realize something in you has changed and it resonates with another soul, for the good. When you’re ready, look around and see that you are still standing. Thank you for being a light in the world.

—Sharon Daugherty

Empowered survivors signing the banner at the 12th Annual Tree of Remembrance event on December 7, 2019.

The 12th Annual Tree of Remembrance: I’m Still Standing

On December 7, 2019, the Metropolitan Police Department’s Victim Services Branch hosted the 12th Annual Tree of Remembrance Program honoring homicide victims killed in the District of Columbia. The event was held at THEARC DC in Ward 8. This year’s theme — “I’m Still Standing” — is a testament to the many survivors that are coping with the trauma of losing a family member to gun violence. As families arrived, they were given a personalized ornament of a beautiful pearl inside of a sea shell. A pearl symbolizes pain and protection. A pearl is developed from pain, when an outside object enters an oyster; the oyster makes a pearl to protect itself. As survivors experience the pain of a homicide, they also gain strength to empower each other. This strength is what carries them through the grief process; through their healing journey and allows them to remember the beautiful life surrounding their loved one. During the ceremony there was the reading of the victims’ names and their photo displayed on the slide show. Approximately 350 family members attended the event and participated in the banner writing fellowship. They were encouraged to write messages on what empowered them to “still stand” or write a beautiful memory of their loved one. The banners are displayed on the walls at the Homicide Branch. It is our hope that these words will help others as they are faced with the realization that they are now dealing with the loss of their family member.

—Carla Okonkwo

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On September 28, the Family Liaison Specialists Unit held a wellness workshop for survivors of homicide victims. The event was held at the Homicide Branch. The workshop was designed to help survivors navigate through the grief process as they move through their healing journey. The day began with Dr. Renetta Weaver speaking on the grief cycle and coping techniques. She also guided the group through self-care exercises of meditation and relaxation techniques that they can include in their daily routine. Secondly, Revered Dr. Kecia Hill led a healthy discussion on the larger connection between faith, grief, and the church. She allowed participants to express their frustrations and struggles about their beliefs in a safe and non-judgmental environment. The final speaker, Ana Ponce, LSW shared information on how children process grief, specifically, on how children grieve differently than adults.

Attendees had the opportunity to explore and share their key(s) to healing as they fellowshipped together. Many people in the group appreciated hearing from others going through the same life event. They were comforted by the fact that they are not alone, and they do not have to grieve in silence. The children in attendance were able to play and socialize together in a supervised setting. Many survivors voiced their appreciation for the Department hosting this event. Overall, the wellness workshop was a huge success; there were 30 people in attendance.

—Cameron Schmelter (Intern)