

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Unfortunately 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.

Carla G. Santos, Malena Castro, Rudimar Canessa, M. L., Ashley Rumbold, M. B., Megan Lee, Helen C. Hall, David L. Jones, Kacey M. Mynum, Elizabeth W. Jones, Sharon Daugherty, Jeanne Newcome

Upcoming Events and Activities

ONGOING

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

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) 642-9250

Domestic Violence & Family Legal Clinics

are 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) 425-7573 for dates & times. Free legal assistance for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault & stalking at our court-based clinic for petitioners only. Call 202-349-0082 for dates & times. clinic@dcvlp.org www.dcvlp.org/clinic

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/teendvmonth 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 impor-

tance of consent in healthy relationships and empowers everyone to put it into practice. www.nsvrc.org/saam

SAAM Day of Action April 7th - Wear Teal to show your support for survivors of sexual assault. #SAAMDayOfAction #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/ncvrw>

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 202-645-6363

—Sharon Daugherty

MPD's First Annual Domestic Violence Awareness Day

Resources
For more information, contact VSB Supervisor Tramaine Newsome at (202) 727-6007.



Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch (VSB) held the first annual Domestic Violence Awareness Day on October 16, with a theme of #breakthecycle. Domestic violence typically follows a cycle of stages that physically, mentally, and emotionally inhibit victims from leaving relationships. Often times, the cycle of violence is repeated from one generation to the next. It becomes like a cycle, never ending, unless we do something to break that cycle. VSB partnered with Soul Cycle and

Zengo Cycle to provide giveaways and raffles for attendees. Those who attended events throughout the District were provided with resources, information, and on the spot services. MPD Headquarters hosted a kickoff event that included various vendors, as well as a food bank, to provide resources and services to those who have been impacted by domestic violence. In the 4th District, individuals could attend one-on-one sessions with the victim specialist and receive assistance with filling out applications for crime victims compensation. 5th



District attendees heard from a guest speaker and learned about the impact of domestic violence on children. In the 6th District, individuals in attendance were able to learn about support available to victims of violent crime. They even had a self-defense presentation provided as well. 7th District attendees received training on teen domestic violence through the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) and Domestic Violence Wears Many Tags (DVWMT).

—Abigail Hansen (Intern)

Coping with Loss During the Holidays

Resources
For additional information or resources, check out:
» www.familyeducation.com/5-tips-coping-loss-during-holidays
» www.health.harvard.edu/blog/coping-with-grief-and-loss-during-the-holidays-201112244028
» Drs. Clarence Tucker and Cliff Davis, *A Self-Help Manual on Grief Through the Holidays*
» James Miller, *How Will I Get Through the Holidays?*

As the holiday season and end of year approaches many of us are looking forward to celebrating the holiday season with friends and family. For those who have experienced the loss of a loved-one, the holiday season may not be such a joyous occasion, as memories of loss and grief set in. Following a loss, many lives are turned upside-down. Needless to say, the holidays are going to be different this year compared to year's past. The following tips are recommended to help in coping with grief during this time of year:
» To reduce needless stress, consider doing less and take others up on their offers to cook, shop, decorate, etc.

- » During this time, it is alright do things differently. You may try enjoying smaller 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 mood and turn instead to meditation, bubble baths, or writing in a journal as an outlet for your grief, or you may speak with a grief counselor to help guide you through this difficult time. There is help available and you are not alone.
You may find the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing helpful at this time of year. See www.wendtcenter.org for more information or call (202) 624-0010 or (202) 610-0066.

—Helen Hall

Empowered Survivors

AS WE LET OUR OWN LIGHT SHINE, WE UNCONSCIOUSLY GIVE OTHER PEOPLE PERMISSION TO DO THE SAME.
— Nelson Mandela

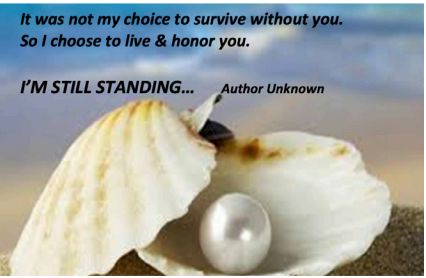
We don't ever ask for this name. It's sometimes not even a decision to claim this title. It's what we become, slowly over time. We're simply surviving at first and even then it doesn't feel like it. We're just trying to find our way through. We find the strength among us and keep holding on. Then the pain opens us 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 time, 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 seashell. A pearl symbolizes pain and protection. A pearl is developed from pain, when an outside object enters an oys-



ter; 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

MPD Host Survivors Wellness Workshop

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 fellowshiped 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)



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