

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Winter 2021 | Volume 12, Issue 3

Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Without a doubt, 2020 has been challenging. As we transition to 2021 the Victim Services Branch wishes you hope, peace, health and happiness in the upcoming

new year and beyond. Let us know how we can be of service to you. We are here to help.

Upcoming Events and Activities

JANUARY

National Stalking Awareness Month

January is National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM)! Stalking is a prevalent crime that often co-occurs with — and increases the risks of — domestic and dating violence. Over half of stalkers are (current or former) intimate partners. Stalking is a terrifying and psychologically harmful crime in its own right as well as a predictor of lethality. On average, intimate partner stalkers are the most threatening and dangerous type of stalker, and stalking increases the risk of intimate partner homicide by three times. We all have a role to play in identifying stalking and supporting victims and survivors. Learn more at www.stalkingawareness.org about stalking and how you can help stop it!

National Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Human trafficking is a crime in which force, fraud or coercion is used to compel a person to perform labor, services or commercial sex. Commercial sexual exploitation/sex trafficking is a serious crime and victims of commercial sexual exploitation/sex trafficking need support and services.

DMV area: <https://fairgirls.org>
1-855-900-3247 Now 24/7!
Help is available – Call 888-373-7888 or text “HELP” to 233-733 <https://humantraffickinghotline.org>

For more resources on Human Trafficking:
www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/ovw-s-podcast-patchwork-looks-human-trafficking
<https://hopeforjustice.org/national-slavery-and-human-trafficking-prevention-month>

Building Stronger Families and Sharing Community Resources

In partnership with the D.C. Office of the Attorney General, Children's National Medical Center, Building Legacy and Culture w/Knowledge and Latin American Youth Center.

Wednesday, January 27 | 5:30 - 6:30 pm
Virtual

Free Virtual Town Hall: Part 2
Providing Youth and Families with Resources to Improve Health and Well-Being. You are invited to attend a free virtual learning series via Zoom designed to provide you with information to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and connect you with helpful resources in the District. Register at oag.dc.gov/dcyouth2
Contact: CommunityAffairs@childrensnational.org

Safe Shores/The DC Children's Advocacy Center/Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children® Training

This training teaches adults how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. The program is designed for individuals concerned about the safety of children as well as organizations that serve youth. Training includes discussion about critical issues in sexual abuse prevention and the relevance of these issues in our communities through a video sharing the voices of survivors and experts in the field.
English

Thursday, January 14, 2021 | 2 – 4:30 pm
Tuesday, February 9, 2021 | 1 – 3:30 pm
Wednesday, March 24, 2021 | 2 – 4:30 pm

To register for a free training, visit:
www.safeshores.org/get-involved/stewards-of-children

Contact:
Kaylan Weems, Prevention and Outreach Associate kweems@safeshores.org

TRUTH Conference

January 22 | 9 am – 6 pm

TRUTH stands for Tools and Resources for Understanding the Trafficking of Humans. The TRUTH Conference aims to educate service providers and allied professionals on best practices for serving individuals affected

by domestic human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

Black History Month Webinar

In light of Black History Month, we will be highlighting the intersection of human trafficking and racial issues in the United States.

Every Wednesday in February | 1 pm

Women's History Month Webinar

In light of Women's History Month, we will be raising awareness of violence against women in the US.

Every Wednesday in March | 1 pm

To learn more, contact FAIR Girls Jasmine Morales for all three events via email jmorales@fairgirls.org

COVID-19 Free Prayer Helpline

DCAEHS DC Alliance, Pastoral Care Chaplaincy Program & Services
Ongoing 7 am – 10pm

Contact Pastor Patricia Saunders, M.Div., Th.D. - CEO/President 240-988-3483
www.dcaehs.org

Are you feeling loneliness, depression, anxiety, scared, tired or confused? Don't suffer in silence. Please leave contact information and Prayer request. All calls returned within 24 hours.

—Sharon Daugherty

Nonprofit Holds Toy Drive to Benefit Children Affected by Homicide in DC

In Gratitude

Many thanks to all who helped make this year's event extra special. For more information on how to provide assistance or register for MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc. Children's Holiday Party next year, please contact: **Shanda Smith** at (202) 446-9433 or murdermistaken@yahoo.com

The holiday season can be challenging for those who have lost a loved one to homicide. This season of celebration can produce countless emotions and memories for those coping with grief and loss. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many survivors experienced additional financial pressures that made it difficult to provide gifts to their children during the holiday season.

For the past 12 years, homicide survivor and Founder of MURDERMISTAKEN Inc., Ms. Shanda Smith has worked tirelessly to organize a holiday event for children affected by homicide in the District of Columbia. Of course, things look different this year, but her goal remains the same: to engage and empower children as they deal with the death of a loved one. Despite the chaos brought on during 2020, Ms. Smith did not want these children to feel forgotten. As a mother who experienced the death of two children, Shanda knows the pain and struggle of supporting children after a tragic loss. In December 1993, Ms. Smith's



two children, Rodney and Volante' were victims of homicide.

The Metropolitan Police Department, DC Police Foundation, the DC Public Library, and other survivors shares Ms. Smith's passion; this holiday season approximately 65 children received gifts. Due to the COVID restrictions, Ms. Smith opened her home to schedule ap-

pointments for families to pick up gifts for their children. Volunteers were on hand to deliver to those who were unable to travel. Additionally, Mr. McClenton and Ms. Milton made their appearance as Mr. and Mrs. Clause to greet the children with some holiday cheer. In 2015, the couple's daughter, Charnice Milton was also a victim of a homicide.

—Megan Riley



Letters & Kudos

Share your story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to victim.services@dc.gov or send via US Mail to:

Family Liaison Specialists Unit
101 M Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Grateful for Award

Happy Thankful Thursday, Marlene;

Thank you so so very much for the Beautiful Award. Its simply Beautiful. I watched the program on Saturday. The program was beautifully done and heartfelt. It was an awesome jester that the challenges of the Pandemic didn't stop you from connecting with the Families of Homicide. I appreciate that my name came up at the discussion table. I appreciate each of you and consider you Family.

Thank you for ALL that you do.

God's Peace to you and your entire Family! Sending well wishes, love & hugs to my MPD Family.

Thank you, again.
Best regards,
D.E.B.

Thanks for Listening

Ms. Carla,

Just to say Thank You for listening today. You guys are a blessing. I was shaken a little today to see a mother, sister and aunt outside Homicide crying.

I wanted to try to comfort the mother but didn't know if I should.

It was comforting for you to listen to me babble. If I had encountered the mother coming out. I feel I would have been able to comfort her.

This is a testament as to why you guys are so important. Please express my family gratitude to Marlene Castro and Megan Riley too.

I look forward to assisting with the program.

Respectfully, M. M. R.

Kind Words Mean a Lot

I want to tell you I appreciate you so much for saying such kind words about me thank you thank you thank you and yes I did cry and my kids mad at me but that's okay love you girl.

Ms. M. J.

Gratitude for Tree of Remembrance

Good morning Beautiful Lady!!!

How are you and the rest of the crew? I just wanted share a multitude of gratitude for the many hands that put in a great effort for The 2020 Tree Of Remembrance (TOR) Ceremony! You, the crew and myself have been journeying together since 2005 and as difficult as the TORs are to attend I'm very grateful for the monumental efforts for this year's!

My wonderful eldest brother Greg was able to view the virtual TOR this year and he wanted you to know in his words it was outstanding and I promised him I'd copy him on the message to you!

GOD'S continual Blessings upon you and the safety of the crew!

Be talking to you soon!!
Blessings Always,
In HIS Care,
Ms. B.

New Process to Submit a Crime Victims Compensation Program Application

The Crime Victims Compensation (CVCP) has recently implemented changes to submitting an application for service. The application is available on line and can be completed and submitted directly to CVCP. Families who do not have access to computers/internet, etc. may go to one of the five satellite locations to complete their application.

Once the application is completed, it can be printed,

signed, placed in an envelope, and given to the court security officer on site. Envelopes are available at the sites. A CVCP team member will pick up the applications from the sites.

If you want to use a remote site location to complete an application, call (202) 879-1900 or email DCCourtsRemoteSites@dcsc.gov at least 24 hours to reserve a remote access computer station.

To access the online application on your personal device

go to Crime Victim Compensation Website at www.dccourts.gov/services/crime-victims-compensation-matters. For additional information, contact CVCP at (202) 879-4616.

The Metropolitan Police Department, Victim Services Branch staff is available to assist families to navigate the new process, contact the Victim Services Branch at (202) 645-6363 or (202) 727-6007.

—Marlene Castro

DYRS Shoot for Peace

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) joined forces with Cary Michael, Artbae CEO/Creative Director, and MPD Victim Services to “Shoot for Peace.” Both entities were recently recognized by Mayor Bowser. Artbae won the Emerging Creative Award during the 35th Annual Mayor’s Arts Awards presented by Mayor Muriel Bowser. DYRS was recognized for their transformational work through the ending of court oversight. “We are proud that DYRS has transformed into a national leader in

the juvenile justice space, consistently demonstrating that through a focus on restorative justice, love, and empowerment, we can change lives and continuously reimagine how we serve and improve the lives of our young people, their families, and our entire community,” said Mayor Bowser. In our Dec. 9th “Paint a Picture with MPD” event, Cary Michael led the DYRS youth group for at-risk gun violence. One leading question for consideration for the youth in de-



signing this event was “Why do you feel the need to have a gun?” Our theme developed from this. Cary Michael shared his experience on Instagram: Additional photos and participants’ comments: “The bullets are killing the devil, I’m shooting hearts from the gun, I love people of all colors, I’m spreading love, not hate.”

—Sharon Daugherty

Now You Know RoundTable, Tree of Remembrance Edition

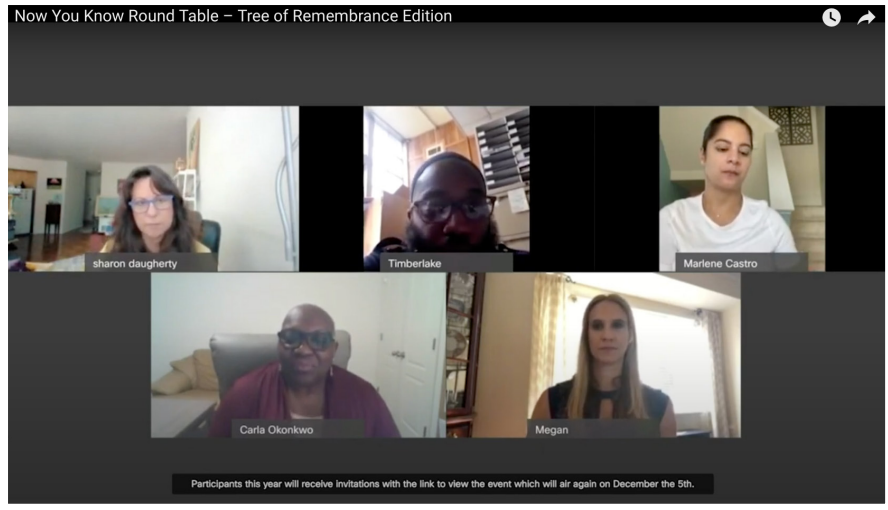
MPD Victim Services Branch continues to reach our community with our online series “Now You Know Round Table.” Our topics cover issues related to victims of crime, services, where to turn and are interwoven with stories of hope. Our goal is to strengthen our community re-

lationships and increase victims’ awareness of access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This edition provided the history and meaning of Tree of Remembrance (TOR). We also gave our viewers the how and why of what we do in this annual event to honor the lives of loved ones lost to violence in the District of Columbia.

Each of our committed staff from the VSB Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FSLU) delivered by holding the event online. Our guests were Victim/Family Liaison Specialists Mark Timberlake, Megan B. Riley, MA, Marlene Castro, MA, and FSLU Supervisor, Carla J. Okonkwo, MA CPM, who discussed the history of TOR, the meaning of, special care in choosing, creating, and presenting the ornaments, and the community that has been created and sustained through this powerful event.

You can view the Now You Know RoundTable-Tree of Remembrance Edition here: <https://youtu.be/DUssSuKuljA>

—Sharon Daugherty

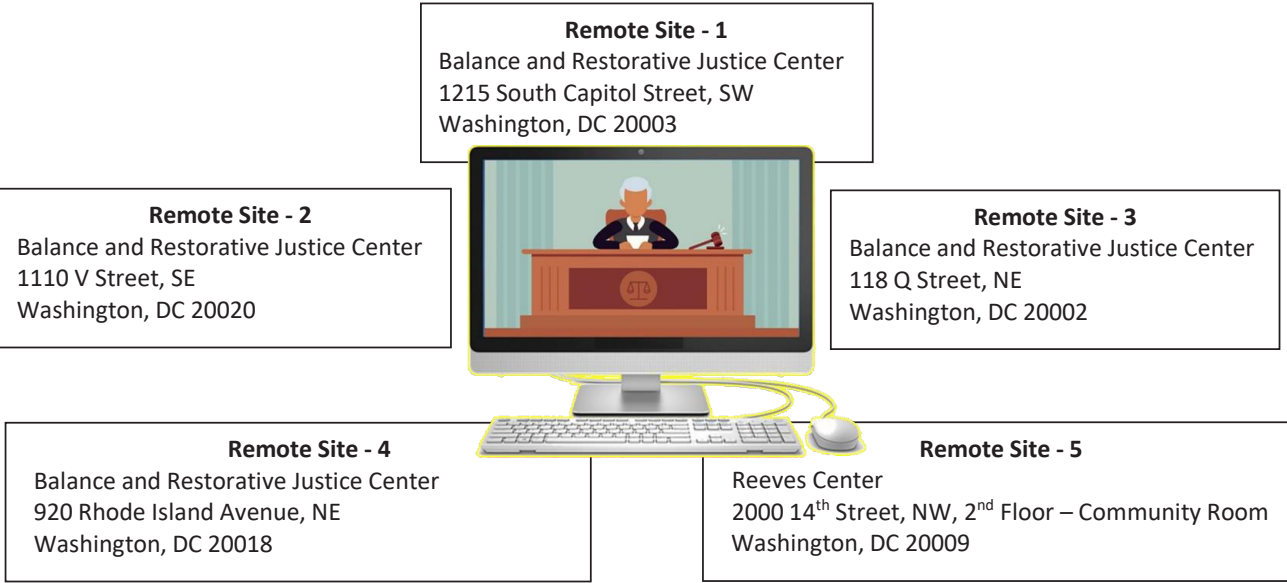


District of Columbia Courts
Tips for Using DC Courts Remote Hearing Sites

The DC Courts have **remote hearing sites** available in various locations in the community to help persons who may not have computer devices or internet service at home to participate in scheduled remote hearings. The Courts are committed to enhancing access to justice for all.

There are five remote access sites throughout the community which will operate: **Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm.**

The remote site locations are:



If you want to use a remote site location for your hearing, call **202-879-1900** or email DCCourtsRemoteSites@dcsc.gov at least **24 hours before your hearing to reserve a remote access computer station.** If you require special accommodations such as an interpreter for your hearing, please call **202-879-1900** at least **24 hours in advance of your hearing so the Courts can make arrangements.**

You should bring the following items when you come to your scheduled site location

- 1. Your **case number** and any **hyperlinks** provided by the Courts for your scheduled hearing.
- 2. Any documents you need for the hearing (evidence), including exhibits, receipts, photos, contracts, etc.
- 3. Materials for notetaking, including pen and paper.
- 4. A facial covering will be required for entry into the remote hearing location; if you do not have a facial covering one will be provided.

***Safety and security measures are in place at the remote sites.**

Contact information to schedule your remote access computer station:

Call: **202-879-1900**
Email: DCCourtsRemoteSites@dcsc.gov

MPD Celebrates 13th Annual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony

The Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch held the 13th Annual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony on December 5, 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event was held virtually. For the first time in thirteen years, families were unable to gather and support each other as they honor their loved ones. However, the Department wanted to continue the Tree of Remembrance tradition to remember and honor those homicide victims in the District of Columbia.

Families and friends were invited to view the event on MPD's YouTube Channel at https://youtu.be/QWt_M05fc7A. Though this year's ceremony looked different, the goal is the same

to support and encourage fellowship among survivors. Creating rituals and traditions can help families feel a sense of connection on their grief journey. Following the moment of silence in the ceremony, families were provided fellowship tips:

- » Share memories with family or someone that you trust and talk about your loved one.
- » You might spend time with a picture or an object connected to the person
- » Hold a birthday party in their honor.
- » Cook their favorite food/meal
- » Light a candle
- » Practice breathing, meditation, or prayer
- » Visit a favorite place, like a restaurant or park.
- » Plant a tree or special plant
- » Volunteer to serve in their honor

Families were provided an opportunity to pick up an ornament at the Homicide Branch. This year's ornament is a snowflake frame in which families can display a picture of their loved ones throughout the holiday season. The snowflake ornament was inspired by the following quote:

"Grief is like a snowflake... sometimes it comes one flake at a time; other times it comes like a blizzard. It melts away, but it always comes back. Just as each snowflake is unique, each person experiences grief in their own unique way." – Julia Cook

Though we each grieve differently, we are not alone. Each survivor is an important part of the Tree of Remembrance and collectively; we are as strong as the root.

—Megan Riley



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