

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

Good Job

Hi Ms. Fields I want to give a review. Ms. Torie do a good job at doing her job. Thank you. Have a good day.
 —K.T.

Long-Time Support

I'd like to thank Ms. Carla and her entire Team who have been with us since 2005, she and her team are now family. Though they struggle through their own

journeys, they are an incredible support system. On behalf of James and my entire family, we thank you... GOD Bless You!!!
 —B.C.

A Special Group

You are a special group of people. Also, will definitely miss the ceremony in person. Keep up the good work. Happy Holidays.
 —D.C.

Helping Return to Life

Ms. McHenry... Thank you for all that you and your team does to investigate cases and support victims so that we can begin to return to our lives.
 —L.A.

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE

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



Winter 2023 | Volume 14, Issue 3

Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

The Victim Services Branch had a meaningful engaging year at the Metropolitan Police Department in 2022. We safely advocated for and supported families and survivors of homicides and other violent crimes. We encouraged families and survivors to stay con-

nected with the Metropolitan Police Department through the services of the Victim Services Branch as well as stay involved in investigations. Our 2023 commitment to families is that we will continue to highlight the resources that are available and continue to empower and support those

impacted by crimes in the District of Columbia.

Take care!



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

Upcoming Events and Activities

January

Brokenness to Boldness Talk Show

Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2023 // 7:30-8:45 pm
 Mark your calendars, for DVWMT Sister Circle "monthly anonymous call" with our guest **Diva Robin Barkins**, sharing education, encouragement and empathy for those who are looking for help, hope and healing. Devoted sisters, she's going to require our unconditional "listening" support, it's never easy sharing our stories. #IAmMySistersKeeper.

Anonymous call: 1-508-924-3071
 Pin#1919

DVWMT Expert Education Corner with Queen Afi

Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023 // 7-8 pm
 Dinner Table Conversation Topic: DNA "The Loyal Side." The expert "Queen Afi" is inviting you to dinner; she's going to educate "students" on DNA being the loyal side of us and why we should open our perspectives regarding loyalty. "Famous Listeners" join us and generously lend DVWMT your attentive ears so we can fiercely continue to knock on the doors of domestic violence and intentionally break strongholds.

Watch Live: [FBLIVE@DVWMT96](https://www.facebook.com/DVWMT96) | [YOUTUBE@DVWMT96](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) | [TWITTER@VIOL-WEARMANYTAG](https://twitter.com/VIOLENCETAG)
Contact: DVWMTS@gmail.com

Universal Pride Meetings

Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11, 2023 // 1-2:30 pm
Ongoing 2nd Sat. of each month
 The **DC Center for the LGBT Community** is holding Universal Pride Meetings – Via Zoom

This group seeks to support, educate, empower, and create change for People with Disabilities (PWD). Discussion would include but not limited to:

- Common intersections between LG-BTQIA/disability.
- Dating/ relationship perspectives
- Creating access/ breaking down barriers in public spaces for LGBTQ PWDs.

REGISTER:
 Email supportdesk@thedccenter.org

The group facilitator will be Actor/Disability Advocate **Andy Arias** queries can be sent to andyarias09@gmail.com.

Foster Care/Adoption Information Sessions

Jan. 14, Feb. 11 & March 11, 2023 // 10-11:15 am
 These sessions will provide an overview of the licensing process, as well as all the resources and supports that are provided to our foster parents.

REGISTER:
 Visit www.fosterdckids.org or call **202-671-Love (5683)**

CONTACT:
Dr. Regina Lawson, MSW, PhD, Supervisor of the Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment Unit at **202-905-5338** or regina.lawson@dc.gov

Stewards of Children® Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training (Virtual)

Wednesday, Jan. 11 & Feb. 8, 2023 // 10 am-12:30 pm
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 // 5:30-8 pm
 This training teaches adults how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. 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.

SPONSORING AGENCY:
 Safe Shores – The DC Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)

REGISTER:
www.safeshores.org/get-involved/stewards-of-children

Talking with Children About Safety from Sexual Abuse
Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2023 // 5-6 pm
 Learn how to talk with and listen to children about sexual abuse and personal safety.

REGISTER:
www.safeshores.org/get-involved/additional-trainings

February

Healthy Touch for Children and Youth
 Learn guidelines for healthy touch and safe, respectful ways to interact with children at home and in youth serving settings.
Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023 // 5 PM – 6 PM

REGISTER:
www.safeshores.org/get-involved/additional-trainings

March

Bystanders Protecting Children from Boundary Violations and Sexual Abuse
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 // 5-6 PM
 Participants will learn how to make spontaneous and planned interventions that reinforce boundaries and protect children.

REGISTER:
www.safeshores.org/get-involved/additional-trainings

CONTACT:
Kaylan Weems, Prevention & Outreach Specialist, **202-645-3228**, prevention@safeshores.org

MPD'S 15th Annual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony

The Metropolitan Police Department's First Annual Tree of Remembrance Event was held in 2008 making this our 15th Annual Tree of Remembrance. Although we could not gather in person to honor our loved ones this year, it is always important that we don't neglect the opportunity to reflect and honor them. We hope that the legacy of the Tree of Remembrance continues even when we cannot gather as a community because we all need a reminder that we don't walk this journey alone. The purpose of this event remains the same, gather as survivors, honor our loved ones, and support each other on our grief journey.

This year's theme, "Their Legacy Lives On," is about honoring the legacy of loved ones lost to homicide.

The image of the Tree of Life represents many legacies. This can be seen in the roots that go deep within the earth where we stand, and the limbs that stretch toward the sky above where our loved ones have gone. When we think of our grief journey, we can look at the trees that shed their leaves each fall and use this image as an important reminder that as we let go of painful feelings, we can focus

MPD'S 15TH ANNUAL
Tree of Remembrance

The Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch would be honored to have you attend our online Fifteenth Annual Holiday Remembrance Event. This special event is dedicated to honoring homicide victims in the District of Columbia.

Watch the Program Anytime
Simply enter bit.ly/mpdtr2022

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@DCPoliceDept OfficialDCPolice DeptDCPolice

Robert J. Contee III
Chief of Police

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

our eyes on the beautiful mark they left in our hearts. This is what we call "Legacy." The Tree of Remembrance is so deeply impactful because our hearts are wide open, collectively healing our community together.

During the ceremony, Ms. **Monica Campbell**, mother of **Malik Morris** (2021), and Ms. **Barbara Cohen**, sister of **James Samuel Brown** (2005), shared the legacies of their loved ones that is seen in their children and grandchildren, but most of all in love that will live on. Additionally, Victim Specialist, Ms. **Ashley McHenry** shared how the theme allowed her to dig deeper into the intangible legacy left behind by her father, who was tragically murdered when she was only five years old. Ms. McHenry said, "After all these years of healing, I realized that once grief left, his legacy remained. Now when someone asks me, 'How did he die?', I reply, 'I'd much rather tell you how he lived, and how his legacy continues to live in me. Legacy is not created in death; legacy is cre-

ated in life."

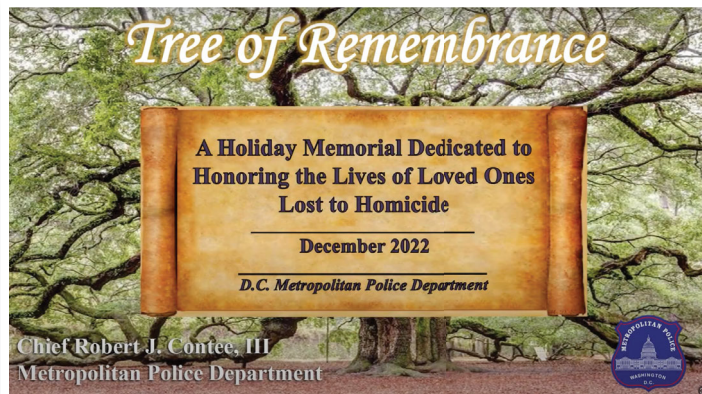
As you think of your loved ones' legacy, it is equally important to honor them by taking care of yourself, which we know they would most want now and ongoing in this new life you are forging.

First, last, and throughout, take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. You might:

- » Light a candle, breathe & meditate
- » Talk with friends, seek counseling
- » Attend or create your own Healing Circles
- » When you're ready, return to your activities and hobbies, and find new ones
- » Give yourself grace and time
- » Honor them by thriving
- » Most of all...be patient with yourself

Whatever the legacy is we invite you to allow the Tree of Remembrance Ceremony to give you hope and the freedom to celebrate the legacy of your loved one this holiday season.

—Victim Services Branch



Annual Murdersmistaken, Inc. Children's Holiday Party 2022



The holiday season can be especially challenging for those who have lost a loved one to homicide. This season of celebration can bring a myriad of emotions and memories for those coping with grief and loss. Following a loss, many survivors experience financial pressures that make it challenging to provide gifts to their children during the holiday season.

Shanda Smith, homicide survivor and Founder of Murdersmistaken, Inc., can personally relate to the struggles survivors face after losing a child to homicide. Ms. Smith lost two of her beloved children, **Rodney** and **Volante** on

December 17, 1993 to homicide in DC. Following the loss of her children, Ms. Smith dedicated herself to supporting other mothers and family members through her Annual Murdersmistaken Children's Holiday Party. This event brings families together to celebrate the holidays in a supportive and caring environment and provides gifts for the children.

On December 17, 2022, Murdersmistaken, Inc. held its 15th Annual Children's Holiday Party in-person for the first time since the pandemic. Families in attendance enjoyed a time of fellowship including crafts, games, music, dancing, face painting, food, and of course a special visit from Mr.

& Mrs. Santa Clause! With the help of the Metropolitan Police Department, the DC Police Foundation, the DC Public Library, friends, and other survivors, Ms. Smith was able to provide gifts for over 65 children this holiday season. More meaningful than the gifts, was the loving support given in this community of survivors as they joined together to empower the next generation on their healing journey.

For more information on how to provide assistance or register for MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc. Children's Holiday Party next year, please contact Ms. Smith at (202) 446-9433 or murdersmistaken@yahoo.com.

—Megan Riley

DCAEHS Holds 'Day of Remembrance: Never to Forget'

Resources

For more information on upcoming events and programs visit DC Alliance Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc at <https://dcaehs.org>.

DC Alliance Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc. (DCAEHS) is a grassroots non-profit (501c3) organization that has supported Survivors of Homicide Victims in the District of Columbia since 2009. Our Motto is "One Homicide is One too Many." On July 29-30, 2022, DCAEHS sponsored our first Women's Retreat at Sandy Cove Ministries Resort for mothers who lost a child (children) to homicide. The goal was to promote healing and allow for a weekend of enjoyment. We were encouraged to start a Retreat for fathers.

DCAEHS also celebrated the National Day of Remembrance on September 25, 2022, with the theme, *Never to Forget*. The women who attended the retreat were primary promoters for this success-

ful event. One of the mothers gave a testimony on how the retreat helped her and other mothers begin their healing process. The purpose and goal of the Annual Day of Remembrance Event are to let families impacted by homicides know that they are loved and will not be forgotten. Attendees were provided a long stem red rose in honor of their loved ones. We were honored to have District leaders and representatives from the Metropolitan Police Department in attendance to show their support for this annual event and agree to work collectively to stop gun violence and homicides in the District of Columbia.

Ashan M. Benedict, Executive Assistant Chief of Police greeted the audience, and the keynote speaker was **Andre Wright**, Assistance Chief of Police. **Daniel Hickson**, Senior Advisor, Executive Office of the Chief of Police was there to represent MPD's Homicide

Reduction Project. Also in attendance were **Chairman Phil Mendelson**, Council of the District of Columbia, Mr. **Matthew M. Graves**, United States Attorney of the District of Columbia, Mrs. **Julia Dunkins**, founder of Survivors of Homicide, Inc., and **Rev. Dr. Roger A. Mitchell, Jr.**, Chair of Howard University Pathology.

MPD's Homicide Branch detectives were in the audience to address any concerns or questions regarding the investigation. **Det. Anthony D. Greene** said, "the occasion was a collaborative community event in which law enforcement was able to reconnect with families of homicide victims. In reconnecting, law enforcement reinforced their commitment to the needs and concerns of families. The collaboration between clergy, community groups, and law enforcement in this space was great to see."

Submitted by Pastor Patricia Saunders



Domestic Violence and Its Effects on Housing Options

The psychological and physiological consequences of Domestic Violence are well researched and discussed. For many years, survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), families and advocates have voiced how abuse contributes to home insecurity. To decrease systemic housing barriers, government and community agencies have established responses to support housing stability for victim to rebuild their lives to live free and independent.

Research literature and victim input have differentiated housing needs and types based on the abuse's severity, duration, and recovery. Organizations in the District of Columbia — along with governmental agencies — have introduced diversified housing to meet the needs of survivors. Housing needs are varied and can be distinguished among three prime categories: (1) Emergency, (2) Transitional/Homeless Prevention, and (3) Permanent. Here is a brief explanation of each housing type, coupled with District resources.

Emergency Housing

Within any safety plan, escaping abuse is priority number one. Often, victims will leave a residence out of fear or to deescalate further tension. Without having a trusted fam-



ily/friend's house as a getaway, combined with having minimal funds, survivors are challenged with an immediate housing/shelter emergency. Abuse occurs anytime - thus, DC Safe operates the 24/7 Victim Hotline to locate safe shelter for victims and their family. Victims and/or Professionals are able to call the hotline. Moreover, the Crime Victims Compensation Program, via the District Court, also offers temporary shelter and moving cost reimbursements.

Transitional Housing

Emergency shelter is temporary. To avert displacement, and to support victims starting anew, transitional housing is a pathway forward to housing stability with a goal of working towards permanent housing. District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) is an agency that offers an array of specialized transitional services, including homeless prevention and wraparound services to address underlying issues. DASH's scattered sites are inclusive to a victim's age and identity. DASH's short-term housing works with a goal for victims to reconstruct their lives to live happily, safely, independently, and free of abuse.

Permanent Housing

The cornerstone to securing permanent housing is having accessible funds. Moving incurs expenses such as furniture, application fees and other unforeseen cost. And with living paycheck-to-paycheck, limited money will not cover each need. With the aim of ending violence and empowering lives, My Sisters Place offers a spectrum of financial assistance, including their "Move-in" program that helps supply household items, as well as their "Fresh Start Fund" which covers moving cost, utility bills and other care.

Domestic Violence can disrupt a victim's housing stability. Whether the housing need is emergency-based, transitional-to-permanent, a diligent continuum of care is critical to a survivor's recovery. Victim Specialist in the Metropolitan Police Department, Victim Services Branch (VSB) partners with the resources mentioned above, along with other alike programs, to ensure survivors have access to safe housing. A victim's protection is paramount — and MPD has established an abuse response protocol for Officers, which includes referring victims to safe shelter on scene.

—Torie Stone

Resources

- **My Sisters Place:** Programs and Services – My Sister's Place (mysistersplacedc.org)
- **DC Safe:** www.dcsafe.org
- **DASH:** Domestic Violence Shelter, Safe Housing in DC (dashdc.org)
- **Crime Victims Compensation Program:** Crime Victims Compensation Matters | District of Columbia Courts (dccourts.gov)