

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Winter 2013 | Volume 5, Issue 3

Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

As the year ends, it offers a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the services the Victim Services Branch has offered this year. It is our goal to provide consistent and accessible victim advocacy and education for those impacted by violence in the District of

Columbia. We embrace this awesome responsibility and task without pause. Moving into 2014, our commitment remains strong to individuals impacted by crime. Members aim to help victims purposefully address challenges, move obstacles and overcome barriers while navigating the

criminal justice system. From all of us at the Victim Services Branch thanks for allowing us to provide such a meaningful service.

Upcoming Events and Activities

January



Stalking is a dangerous crime that affected 6.6 million adults in the United States in one year. The better we understand the facts about stalking, the more we can do to stop it. That's why the Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime, and the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, launched National Stalking Awareness Month in 2004. Every January since then, communities across the country have focused on stalking – holding events, sharing information, and building awareness about the crime. Visit www.StalkingAwarenessMonth.org for resources to help you plan events and outreach on stalking throughout the year. You will find an interactive quiz on stalking, magnets, fact sheets, guides, event ideas, and media tools to raise awareness about stalking.

February



For years, young people across the nation have organized to put a stop to dating abuse. With their adult allies, they achieved a major victory in 2005 when the importance of addressing teen dating abuse was highlighted in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The following year, Congress followed the lead of dozens of national, state and local organizations in sounding the call to end dating abuse. Both Chambers declared the first full week in February "National Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Week." Then in 2010, they began dedicating the entire month of February to teen dating violence awareness and prevention.

March

International Women's Day is annually held on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements throughout history and across nations. It is also known as the United Nations (UN) Day

for Women's Rights and International Peace.

International Women's Day events are held worldwide on March 8. Various women groups, including political, community, and business leaders, as well as leading educators, inventors, entrepreneurs, and television personalities, are usually invited to speak at various events on the day. Such events may include seminars, conferences, luncheons, dinners or breakfasts. The messages given at these events often focus on various themes such as innovation, the portrayal of women in the media, or the importance of education and career opportunities.

April National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW)-April 6-12, 2014

Each April, OVC leads communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. In 2014, NCVRW will be observed April 6-12, 2014 and the theme is "30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice."



National Youth Violence Prevention Week – April 7-11, 2014.

The National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) is proud to be a founding partner of the National Youth Violence Prevention Campaign. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness and to educate students, teachers, school administrators, counselors, school resource officers, school staff, parents, and the public on effective ways to prevent or reduce youth violence. This week long national education initiative will involve activities that demonstrate the positive role young people can have in making their school and community safer.

—Tramaine Newsome

Next-of-Kin Meeting Helps Families from 2012 and 2013 Cases

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit held its bi-annual Next-of-Kin Meeting at the Homicide Branch the week of October 21-25, 2013. Twenty next-of-kins with open homicide cases from the years 2012 and 2013 attended meetings to speak with the detective assigned to their loved one's case. These personal meetings provided attendees the opportunity to get an update on

the investigation and to be connected with support services and referrals offered by the Victim Services Branch. Attendees were provided with information on grief counseling, holiday assistance, and details regarding various events held to honor those lost to homicide in the District of Columbia. Next-of-kins that were unable to attend October's Next-of-Kin meeting were given the op-

portunity to schedule an alternative appointment with their detective. The Family Liaison Specialists Unit holds two Next-of-Kin Meetings each year in October and April for open homicide cases from the current three years. For more information on upcoming Next of Kin meetings please contact MPD's Victim Services Branch at **202-724-4339**.

—Megan Riley

STOP IT NOW! Together We Can End Child Sexual Abuse

Resources

Police Emergency — 911
DC Metropolitan Police
Youth Investigations Division
— 202-576-6768

Stop It Now Campaign
www.stopitnow.org

National Child Abuse Hotline — 1-800-4-A-Child (1-800-422-445) www.childhelp.org/

DC Rape Crisis Center Hotline (24-hour, confidential)
202-333-7273 www.dcrcc.org

Men Can Stop Rape www.mencanstoprape.org

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

If you are asking yourself this question it means you are a concerned individual. It indicates you are acting in advance to intervene and take important steps to prevent and protect a child from sexual abuse. Kids feel safer when parents and caregivers spend time to educate themselves about sexual abuse and the warning signs. It also means you are taking proactive measures against a crime.

Sexual Abuse of a child happens when a person who is older or bigger than the child uses their power or authority over the child or takes advantage of the child's trust to coerce or involve them in sexual activity. This sexual activity does not just mean sexual intercourse; it means any sexual activity including fondling, flashing, masturbating, taking sexual photos and oral sex. It is always sexual abuse, no matter if the child agrees to the sexual contact. An offender (most often known to that child and to their family) takes advantage of a child's trust and respect and often the sexual activity is coerced into

not telling anyone about it, by bribing, threatening and/or physically restraining them.

How A Child May Behave

- » Not wanting to go to school, drop in school work
- » Withdrawal from friendships
- » Displaying sexual knowledge or acting out sexual behavior
- » Boundary issues (e.g. people pleasing or unable to say "no")
- » Poor self-image
- » Regressive behaviors (age-inappropriate thumb-sucking or bed-wetting)
- » Excessive worry, fear or over seriousness

(Note: although some of these behaviors can be due to issues other than sexual abuse their presence may indicate the child is at risk of harm.)

If A Child Tells Me He/She Has Been Sexually Abused — What Should I Do?

- » **Start by Believing Them!** The damage that is done by disbelieving a child who is telling the truth outweighs the embarrassment of be-

lieving a child who might be lying. Furthermore, experts tell us that children rarely make up stories of sexual abuse.

- » **Don't Show Anger!** If you have an angry response, the child might think that you are mad at him/her. If you feel uncontrollable anger, let children know immediately that you're not angry at them, you are angry that someone hurt them in this way.
- » **Respond!** This helps a child know they are protected by you and other adults.
- » **Reassure!** Let your child know they've done the right thing by telling you and that it's not their fault.
- » **Get Support for Yourself!** It is very common for a parent/caregiver to experience strong feelings of guilt because they were unable to protect a child from this type of abuse. Gather supportive friends and family around and arrange for individual counseling to talk. For more information, please contact the Victim Services Branch at **202-724-4339**.

What About You?

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, WDC 20024

To celebrate yourself is the practice of loving yourself, your dreams and your true inner being. To celebrate yourself is another way to memorialize your loved one. Below are a few suggestions if you are in your personal this winter season

1. Write down your three favorite traits and slip that piece of paper in your wallet. Pull it out whenever you need a little pick-me-up.
2. Name the Hollywood icon you most relate to. Have your own private movie marathon in your loved one(s) honor.

3. Dress in an outfit you love on an otherwise ordinary day and enjoy the instant surge of “I know I look good” confidence.

4. Start a weekly self-love ritual — a mini foot massages with strawberry-scented lotion perhaps or a Sunday-afternoon catnap.

5. Change your desktop screen saver to a photo of a place you’ve always wanted to go — Tahiti? The ice hotel in Sweden? Dream big!

6. Create your own greatest-hits playlist with songs that remind you of your best memories.

7. Look through a book of

poetry (or go to poetry.com), pick a poem that moves you, and memorize a few lines. You’ll have inspiration or comfort at your fingertips whenever you need it.

8. Explore someplace new without leaving town. Log on to your area’s tourism website and make a plan to check out a spot where you’ve never been.

9. Write yourself a permission slip to do/try/be something different. Let it remind you that life is full of all sorts of amazing possibilities.

Contact any member of the Victim Services Branch for additional ideas for ways to celebrate you.

—La Verne Harley

Tree of Remembrance

Since 2008, the Metropolitan Police Department has been hosting our annual Tree of Remembrance. This event was created as a way to unite families help them

cope with their grief, come together to honor their loved ones and support each other. The Tree of Remembrance has become a ritual for surviving families of homicide victims. Rituals are a way to remember our loved ones, stay connected while helping with the grieving process. Creating a ritual allows us to act on our grief in a constructive way and feel closer to our loved one. There are different ways of creating your own personal rituals and remember your loved one:

- » Planting a tree or a plant in your loved ones memory
- » Making a donation to your loved ones favorite charity
- » Creating a memory scrap-

book with photos, notes, letters, postcards, and other significant mementos from your life together

- » Visiting your loved one’s burial site
- » Preparing a favorite meal of the loved one and enjoy it as he/she did
- » Light a candle and recall the comfort or guiding light he/she was for you

You may do something similar or might choose to create your own rituals. Conduct your grief rituals for as long and as often as you need to. Do what feels comfortable to you. This is your space and time to express your grief.

—Marlene Castro



The Definition of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain control over another intimate partner. The District of Columbia expands that definition to include family members, former intimate partners, and people victims have lived with in the past. Domestic Violence Awareness Month takes place every October and seeks to highlight the alarming rates of abuse victims experience as well as educate survivors and allies about available resources.

After October, victims of domestic violence still experience horror, sadness, and depression. Without the focus of the entire country, victims can find themselves suffering in silence during the winter months. Domestic violence does not take a break for the holidays. Victims may face a different set of barriers to leaving volatile relationships during this time. Fear of displacement or homelessness (a common result of leaving an abusive relationship) during colder months, can play a role in victims staying in abu-

sive relationships. If you are aware of abuse, let the victim know there is help year round. Emergency resources are in place to assist with housing, counseling, and other wrap around services. For more information about resources and services available to victims of domestic violence, please contact the Victim Services Branch at 202-724-4339.

—Kayce Simmons

‘Remember My Name’

Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline — 1 (800) 799-7233

Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence — 1-800-MD-HELPS

Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE) Hotline — (202) 879-7851

Virginia Alliance Against Domestic Violence Hotline — 1 (800) 838-8238

As we take the time to reflect on the ending year, we pause to honor and remember those victims of domestic violence who have not only experienced a life of domestic abuse, but whom have also lost their lives in the struggle to survive or flee a domestic violence relationship..

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), is a national non-profit member organization that monitors and enforces victims rights policies, while providing awareness to end domestic violence by working with local coalitions throughout the United States. The NACDV also host a webpage so that surviving family members can honor their loved ones by posting their name and minimum information on the memorial page. The webpage is titled “Remember

My Name” and was specifically designed so that family members can honor their loved ones lost due to domestic violence. According to the NCADV, and since the webpage’s inception in 1994, approximately 8, 500 names have been submitted in honor of victim’s of domestic violence homicide. The submission process is very practical and allows family members to can go on the website, click on the memorial page and submit the names of their loved one lost due to domestic violence. The act of being able to honor family members in this way can often aid in the healing process after the trauma of losing a loved one. Further, the memorial page has a two-fold impact by also allowing viewers to see at first glance the prevalence of homicide due to domestic violence, which historically have often gone unrecognized.

Yet, more systemic improvements and advocacy is still needed. While victims and survivors are becoming more and more aware of the risk of future violence, the memorialized names make a poignant statement. That although we have made some strides in prevention, education and awareness, we still have much work to do to put an end to the senseless violence and abuse that continues to plague many of our communities.

To access the Domestic Violence Memorial Webpage, surviving family members may go to <http://www.ncadv.org>, select programs and then select “Remember My Name”.

Additionally, if you or someone you know need help with domestic violence please contact the local domestic support center in your community or contact the organizations in the Resources box at left.

—Helen Hall

Empower Yourself Against Date Rape

What is Date Rape?

When people think of rape, they might think of a stranger jumping out of a shadowy place and sexually attacking someone. But it's not only strangers who rape. In fact, about half of all people who are raped know the person who attacked them. Girls and women are most often raped, but guys also can be raped.

Most friendships, acquaintances, and dates never lead to violence, of course. But sadly, sometimes it happens. When forced sex occurs between two

people who already know each other, it is known as date or acquaintance rape.

Although it involves forced sex, rape is not about sex or passion. Rape has nothing to do with love. Rape is an act of aggression and violence.

Regardless of the clothes someone wore or the way they acted, the person who is raped is not to blame. Rape is always the fault of the rapist. Even if two people are in an intimate relationship, one person does not owe the other person sex. If sex is forced against someone's will, that's rape.

Healthy relationships involve respect. Someone who really cares about you will respect your wishes and not force or pressure you to have sex.

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol is often involved in date rapes. Drinking can loosen inhibitions, dull common sense, and – for some people – allow aggressive tendencies to surface.

Drugs may also play a role. Drugs like Rohypnol ("Roofies"), Gamma-Hydroxybutyrate (GHB), and Ketamine can easily be mixed with drinks to make a person black out and forget things that happen.

Getting Help

Do not be afraid to ask for help. If you are injured, go straight to the emergency room – the Washington Hospital Center has a specially trained nurse on duty 24/7 to perform forensic exams (rape test kits) within 96 hours of being raped. Even if you decide not to notify the police right away, you may still be entitled to a free forensic exam.

To file a police report, call 911. Preserve all physical evidence, i.e., avoid using the bathroom, eating, drinking, washing your body, changing your clothes, etc.

Write down as much as you can remember about the incident.

Check out ASK DC

A new terrific online resource is available called ASK DC. The site is a collaboration of the Mayor's Office of Victim Services and Men Can Stop Rape that provides free, confidential information on counseling services, advocacy, legal assistance and more for victims of rape, incest and other violent offenses.

Additional Reading

To learn more, see www.mpdcc.gov/victimassistance.

—Beyshinah Woods

ASKDC
ASSAULT SERVICES KNOWLEDGE

Get Medical Help | Get an Advocate | Talk with Someone | Get Help in the City | About ASK DC

Confidential. Safe. Free.
For everyone.

If you or someone you care about needs help, ASKDC can help you find it.

Get a Medical Forensic Exam
Call 24/7 to get a free ride to MedStar Washington Hospital Center
800.641.4028

MedStar Washington Hospital Center
For everyone. Get Medical Help. Get an Advocate. Talk with Someone.

Get The App
Get immediate access to the information needed most in the event of a sexual assault in the District of Columbia—quickly, confidentially and free. An invaluable tool for anyone living in or visiting DC. Click one of the links below or search "ASK DC" on the iTunes App Store, Google Play Store, or BlackBerry App World.

Available on the App Store | Get it on Google play | BlackBerry App World

Talk with Someone
Speak 24 hours a day with trained staff from RAINN (Rape, Incest, and National Sexual Assault Hotline).

Visit askdc.org for helpful resources and an app you can install to quickly connect you with tools when you need them.

How May We Assist You?

Victim Services Branch

Tyria Fields Manager 724-4339 tyria.fields@dc.gov

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) provides support services to homicide victims and survivors throughout the investigative process.

Family Liaison Specialists Unit

Carla Okonkwo Supervisor 645-9629 carla.okonkwo@dc.gov
Marlene Castro Family Liaison Specialist 645-9631 marlene.castro@dc.gov
Megan Riley Family Liaison Specialist 645-5537 megan.riley@dc.gov

The Victim Specialists Unit (VSU) provides support, information, and referrals to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Victim Specialists Unit

Helen Hall Victim Specialist 727-6007 helen.hall@dc.gov
Kayce Simmons Victim Specialist 724-2215 kayce.simmons@dc.gov
Esther U. Thomas Victim Specialist 727-6006 estheru.thomas@dc.gov
Tramaine Newsome Victim Specialist 724-2215 tramaine.newsome@dc.gov
Beyshinah Woods Victim Specialist 727-6007 beyshinah.woods@dc.gov

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) provides supportive services to secondary victims of unsolved homicides. Additionally, this unit offers victim services and assistance to victims of violent assaults in the District of Columbia.

Major Case Victims Unit

Dawn M. Christie Victim Specialist 727-7139 dawnm.christie@dc.gov
Laverne Harley Victim Specialist 727-5391 laverne.harley@dc.gov

Please Note: All numbers are area code (202).

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, WDC 20024

I wanted to thank you for the baby clothes you donated to VSB! You and your staff are have been one of our strongest supporters; your kindness over the years has not gone unnoticed! A young mother and her baby will surely be blessed by your kindness.

B.A.

Thank you, Esther!
I for one am very thankful for you, and the MPD.

But, though not employable, and knowing I won't get back to where I was "before," I have been blessed with much

healing and with many caring and effective people along the way.

Have a wonderful holiday!
—K.

I just can't thank you all enough for your continued support!!!! It's truly a blessing for me that you all come out like you do....thank you again and again!!!

—J.B.

On behalf of the Howard University Department of Public Safety, I would like to

sincerely thank you for your participation in our annual Safety Fair. Your contribution played a vital role in this being one of our most successful safety fairs.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks to you and your agency for your continuous support in helping us to increase safety and security awareness. We look forward to working with you again and if the HU Department of Public Safety can ever be of assistance to you, please don't hesitate to call on us

Sincerely,

—L. J.



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