

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

Throughout the course of the year, all of us in Victim Services have had the opportunity to share words of support and understanding as families cope with the loss of a loved one. It is our mission that those services

are provided with understanding, compassion and dignity. Therefore, as we prepare for 2011, we would like to take this time to pledge our continual efforts of educating families about the criminal justice process, advocating for the rights

and services for victims of crime, and connecting survivors to community-based resources.

From all of us in the Victim Services Branch, have a safe new year.

Carla Okonkwo *Megan Riley* *Monique Castro*
Melba *LaVerne Harley*
Kayla *Helen E. Hall*
Esther U. Thomas

Upcoming Events and Activities

Spirit in Action

January kicks off the monthly broadcast of "Spirit in Action," with Kenneth Barnes, Sr, of *ROOT, Inc.* This live radio broadcast educates and empowers victims of crime. To learn more on how you may become a volunteer, call (202) 431-6646.

Host: WPFW Radio Station
When: January 28, 2011
Time: 10 AM - 1 PM
Where: WPFW 89.3 FM

Langston Community Outreach Project

DC Alliance Empowering Homicide Survivors, Inc. (DC Alliance) will launch a new outreach program targeting victims of crime. The program will conduct health and wellness clinics, provide life skills training and offer a youth mentors' program. To learn more about the services that

will be provided, call (202) 529-6217.

Hosts: DC Alliance and Ark of Life Empowerment Inc.
When: January 15, 2010
Time: TBD
Where: 667 24th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

National Crime Victims Rights Week

Each April since 1981, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has helped lead 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. The theme for NCVRW 2011 is "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past." For additional information visit www.ovc.gov/awareness/about_ncvrw.html.

Annual Awards Ceremony

In observance of National Crime Victims' Right Week, the United States Attorney's Office (USAO), District of Columbia will host an award ceremony honoring crime victims and advocates. For additional information, call (202) 514-7566.

Host: Office of the US Attorney, Victims Witness Unit
When: Week of April 10, 2010
Time: TBD
Where: Office of the US Attorney
555 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Submitted by LaVerne Harley

NEXT OF KIN

The Metropolitan Police Department periodically invites the immediate family members of open homicide cases to join us for a special, personal Next-of-Kin Meeting with a homicide detective. MPD wants to reassure families that their loved ones' cases have not been forgotten. The meeting is designed to give families an opportunity to meet, one-on-one, with the assigned detective to discuss their loved one's homicide case. The first Next-of-Kin meeting was

held in May 2007 at the Metropolitan Police Academy on Blue Plains Drive, SW. Meetings are now held at 101 M Street, SW, at MPD's Homicide Branch for current year cases; Next-of-Kin meetings for older unsolved homicide cases are held at 300 Indiana Avenue, NW.

While waiting to meet with detectives, families get information about their rights as victims; literature on grief and trauma; Crime Victims Compensation materials; and information on the MPD Evidence

Control Branch. Families are also connected with system and community-based service providers to address their diverse needs.

Families are encouraged to participate in future Next-of-Kin meetings. Based on the age of the case, your point of contact will be from one of two MPD units — the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363 or the Major Case Victims Unit at (202) 724-4339.

Submitted by Marlene Castro

Frequently Asked Questions About Autopsy Reports

Q: How do I obtain a copy of my loved one's autopsy report?

A: Next of kin may request an autopsy report for their loved one in writing, or in person at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) located at:

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
ATTN: Custodian of Medical Records
1910 Massachusetts Ave., SE
Building #27
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 698-9111

Q: What documentation do I need to provide to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner?

A: The Office of the Medical Examiner requires all persons requesting an autopsy report

to notify the OCME Medical Records Division at (202) 698-9111 prior to coming by the office. The requester must provide a government-issued ID and a check or money order made payable to the DC Treasurer for \$15.

Requests made in writing may be sent to the above address and must include the following information:

- » Name of person making request
- » Relationship to the decedent
- » Name of the decedent
- » Date of death
- » OCME case number (can be found on death certificate)

All written requests must in-

clude a check or money order made payable to the DC Treasurer for \$15. The request will be processed and mailed out in two to three business days.

Q: If my loved one's remains were taken to the Maryland State Medical Examiner's Office, who should I contact for information on obtaining a copy of the autopsy report?

A: For information on obtaining a copy of your loved one's autopsy report from the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's Office, please call (410) 333-3249.

Submitted by Megan Riley

Metropolitan Police Department 3rd Annual Tree of Remembrance Event



On December 4, 2010, the Metropolitan Police Department hosted its 3rd Annual Tree of Remembrance event. The affair was organized by the Investigative Services Bureau, Criminal Investigation Division, Victim Services Branch and it was held at the First District Police Station. During this special event, almost 300 individuals, including friends and family, had the opportunity to interact with other survivors by sharing inspiration-

al, encouraging and thoughtful words in memory and honor of their loved ones. Each family was provided a beautiful personalized ornament with their loved one's name to hang on the tree. Afterwards, they were given the ornament to take home. The names of the homicide victims were read during a slide show presentation of photos provided by the families. The annual event is just one way that the Metropolitan Police Department supports families during the holiday

season and lets them know that they are not forgotten.

Special thanks to the following service providers: Survivors of Homicide, Inc.; Torch of Hope, Inc.; East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership; Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6Co2; ROOT, Inc.; and the many volunteers for their support in making this a meaningful and successful event.

Submitted by Carla Okonkwo

Outreach in Motion

The Victim Services Branch (VSB) of the Metropolitan Police Department is committed to assisting victims of crime and highlighting the resources available to the families and survivors of homicide cases. In our continued efforts to support and empower families, VSB works effortlessly to ensure that we are attentive and responsive to all victims' needs. To adhere to our missions, the VSB has participated in many events throughout the city to provide awareness of the supportive services.

» The National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims (Commemorative Ceremony) was held at the National Press Club, 529 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC, on Saturday, September 25, 2010. It was sponsored by the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc. MPD was selected to participate in a panel forum as a "Discussion Leader" for the Public Forum. Over 50 individuals, including survivors, the general public, professionals in

the victim field, and policy makers, were in attendance.

» The Victim Services Specialists met with residents and staff from the Salvation Army Residential Treatment Center, located at 2100 New York Avenue, NE, monthly throughout 2010 to provide information on the Victim Services Branch. The Salvation Army Residential Treatment Center is a local community residential treatment facility that provides housing for men and women who have a history of substance abuse. The goal of the Salvation Army Residential Treatment Center is to assist the men and women in their facility by providing daily case management, counseling sessions, and referrals to alternate community agencies that would assist them in obtaining a level of independence. The staff believes that the services of Victim Services Branch are very beneficial for the residents and would help those who were victims of a crime.

» The Emery House (Residential Facility), located at 1725 Lincoln Road, NE, Washington, DC, is an organization that provides temporary housing to men who are recovering from substance abuse. On Tuesday, July 20, 2010, the Victim Services Branch was invited to provide information during the daily meeting held for the substance/alcohol abusers to openly discuss their addiction and the progress in the program for recovery. Information included materials on MPD's Victim Services Branch / Family Liaison Unit, Major Case Victims Unit, Victim Specialist Unit, Crime Victims Compensation Program, DC Common Grief, VINE, domestic violence, and stalking. We had the opportunity to hand-out several pamphlets and speak with several individuals about the Victim Services Branch Units.

Submitted by Dawn M. Christie

Victim Specialists Unit

At the forefront of victim services, MPD's Victim Specialists Unit is a part of the Victim Services Branch. The unit helps all sexual assault victims District-wide and offers aid to domestic violence victims. Specialists primarily assist victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Specialists obtain police reports and referrals citywide; they also conduct a targeted case management approach for cases in PSAs 705, 706, 504, 602, 603, 604, and all of the Fourth District. When a victim specialist is called, he or she informs the victim of his or her rights, offers supportive listening, provides crisis-intervention, and provides information and referrals to appropriate agencies. The victim specialist may share information with the victim on the case status or encourage the victim to keep in touch with the detective working on the case. En-

couraging victims to participate in the criminal process helps victims achieve a sense of justice even if the perpetrator is never charged.

The most important goal for the victim specialist is to ensure the victim's safety. That safety can be achieved through relocation or obtaining a civil and/or criminal protection order. Victim specialists may forward a referral for emergency housing or provide court accompaniment during court proceedings. The victim specialist works with the victim to strengthen measures put in place to keep them safe.

Another critical role the Victim Services Branch offers is community outreach. This year, the Victim Specialists Unit took a different approach in educating the community. During Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2010, the Victim Specialists Unit made presentations at Wingate Tow-

ers & Garden Apartments, Vista at Edgewood Terrace, the Vantage at Edgewood Terrace, and Columbia Heights Apartments. They also conducted outreach in designated focus improvement areas. They empowered the community and victims by providing information and explaining the importance of prevention and reduction of victimization. The Victim Specialist Unit also continued its cell phone drive efforts and held information sessions for the mayor's focus improvement areas.

If you would like more information about Domestic Violence Awareness Month or would like to speak with a specialist concerning outreach in your area, please contact Kayce Simmons, Victim Specialist, at [\(202\) 724-2215](tel:2027242215).

Submitted by Kayce Simmons

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:

Victim Services Branch

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

I thank you very much on behalf of the family for assisting us with changing the reward flyers. T.B.

Thank you so much for remembering me on my son's anniversary and for truly caring about me. P.M.

This is the post memoriam and the many faces of my son. I know that you deal with a lot of cases. I don't know how you do it, but thanks for your help. To

be honest, I wish I could have met you under different circumstances. K.L.

Thank you for the assistance... it was really encouraging to call an office and get a live person on the phone. K.S.

Thank you so very much for the uplifting card you sent me, I feel better. I thank you so very much for being there. Thank you and you have a blessed day. C.H.

I am just grateful that you are keeping the communication open.

Again, many thanks for sending me the photo. I'm looking forward to picking up the ornament — what a very meaningful gesture on the part of the MPD. K.W.

It is so encouraging to know that MPD and your team are so supportive at not only the time of loss, but on a continual basis. C.J.

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

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).



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