

# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #9 - January 2008

**Just a Thought**

Learn about the role a family advocate plays in assisting child victims and their families.

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**Web Links**

You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered

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**Alumni Updates**

Always find yourself thinking "I wonder what happened to..." Check out what our alums are up to these days - from birthdays to graduations to job promotions.

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Each newsletter get an inside look at one of the RVAAM peers - 20 questions, 20 unique answers

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## Just a thought...

*Child Advocacy & Victim Services*

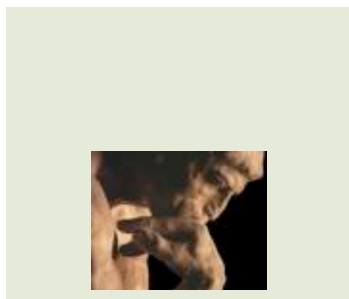
**Linda Sweeney**

The role of a family advocate is of critical importance. For a child victim and his or her family, the criminal justice system can be particularly overwhelming. Thus a family advocate's role is to work with the child victim and his or her family throughout the entire criminal justice process. Specifically the family advocate will act as a liaison between the family, the police, the social workers, and the prosecutors.

**The Child Advocacy Center**

A Child Advocacy Center (CAC) investigates allegations of child molestation and / or sexual exploitation and advocates for the child's needs. CACs assess the needs of the child and his or her family and provides the appropriate services and resources. Ultimately, CACs strive to minimize the trauma experienced by

children and their families. Currently Maryland has sixteen CACs. A profile of the Harford County Child Advocacy Center follows.



**Harford County Child Advocacy Center**

The Harford County Child Advocacy Center exists to provide children with a comfortable, private environment. The CAC staff is available for support, education, and guidance and will provide community referrals to assist families. The multi-disciplinary team consists of professionals from the Harford County Department of Social Services, the Harford County Sheriff's Office, the Maryland State Police, and the Harford County State's Attorney's Office. Although not permanently assigned to the Child Advocacy Center, the Bel Air Police Department, Aberdeen Police Department, and the Havre de Grace Police Department utilize the Center along with the Child Protective Services Staff.

Services provided by the Center include, but are not limited to:

*Videotaping capability* - Children's interviews are audio and video-recorded. Although children may be re-interviewed for the purpose of clarification, recording reduces the number of times children have to be interviewed.

*Resource Library* - The resource library contains books and periodicals which are available to assist families.

*Team Review Meetings* - The Center also promotes a multi-disciplinary approach to abuse investigations and prosecution. Teamwork means individuals from each discipline work together for the best interest of the child. Following the philosophy of promoting a team approach to these cases, the Advocacy Center schedules "team review meetings." The meetings are designed to bring professionals involved in a child's case together in a neutral environment to discuss case progress and to address the best interest of the child and the family.

*Confidentiality* - Staff of the CAC sign an Oath of Confidentiality and are permitted to discuss cases only with the professionals involved.

As the Family Advocate for the Harford County CAC, my role is to work with the child and his or her family throughout the criminal justice process, from the forensic interview all the way through post-judicial processes.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

*Hello Fellow Alumni!*

*I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. I know how chaotic this time of year is, so I hope everyone had a chance to spend some time with family and friends to unwind.*

*Can you believe we're in another year already?! The years seem to just fly right on by. And this year will be our 5th Alumni class! I hope everyone will start promoting the next Academy right now to ensure a wonderful turnout as in years past. Tell everyone you know who you think would benefit from the Academy. We would love to see an even more diverse group than last year (including men!!). Don't forget all those in corrections, clergy, judges, advocates, States Attorney's Offices, police, child advocates, family violence advocates and assistance personnel, social services personnel, to name just a few. Refer to this edition of Hot Topic for further information.*

*I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the Advanced Training RVAAM is sponsoring on February 26th (see more information about this special event in the "Save the Date" section of the newsletter). We will be holding elections for new board members to the Alumni Executive Board at the luncheon during the training as well. I hope you all can attend! It is so important for everyone to stay in contact and find out all the latest information about upcoming events.*

*Remember to take care of yourselves during this hectic time of year...*

*Wishing you all the best!*

*Debbie (Creswell) Bradley, Editor*

[bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

Web Links

*Although we have a virtual library at our fingertips every time we turn on the computer, we often lose sight of the forest through the trees just trying to navigate the world-wide web. So, here are some sites we thought you might find useful ... happy surfing!*

OVC has just published an excellent guide entitled "Helping Sexual Assault Survivors with Multiple Victimitizations and Needs: A Guide for Agencies Serving Sexual Assault Survivors." The 65 page handbook identifies a range of advocacy approaches for sexual assault survivors who have survived multiple victimizations. It's a 'must read' for those who work with sexual assault and rape survivors, and can be downloaded at:

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~socialwk/publications/Sexual%20Assault%20Guide.pdf>

OJJDP has just published "Easy Access to NIBRS: Victims of Domestic Violence" which enables analysis of state data on victims of domestic violence derived from the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Users of this statistical briefing book tool can explore characteristics such as demographic information on victims, victim injuries, and victim-offender relationships. You can access this useful document at:

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezanibrsv/>

The International Association Chiefs of Police (IACP) and Bank of America partnership have debuted three new identity crime products: Police Chief Toolkit, Prevention Toolkit, and Recovery Toolkit. These toolkits are available either by download from the Web at <http://www.idsafety.org/> or by placing an order via email at [idsafety@theiacp.org](mailto:idsafety@theiacp.org)

OJJDP has just released "Juvenile Court Statistics, 2003-2004." Prepared by the National Center of Juvenile Justice, this 160 page report draws on data from more than 2,000 courts with jurisdiction over 75 percent of the juvenile population in 2004, and describes more than 1.6 delinquency cases. The report also reviews trends since 1985 and provides county and state data for 2003 and 2004. The report is available online at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=240291>

BJS has just published its "2007 Indicators of School Crime and Safety." This annual report examines crime occurring in school as well as on the way to and from school. It also provides the most current detailed statistical information on the nature of crime in schools, school environments, and responses to violence and crime at school. The report can be accessed at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs07.htm>

News From the Field

The 2007 General Assembly passed several bills that will improve laws impacting sexual assault prosecutions. These include a bill to make child sexual abuse a crime of violence and the human trafficking bill.

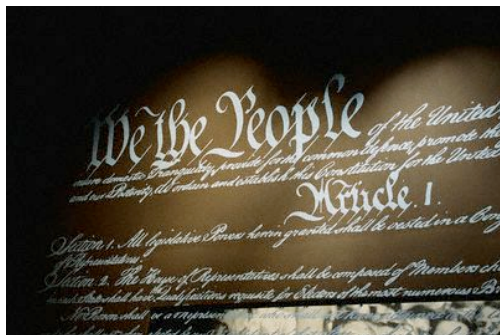
**Child Sex Abuse as a Crime of Violence (HB213/SB170; see also HB937)** - This bill will designate most crimes of "sexual abuse of a minor" as a "crime of violence" when the child-victim is under 13 and the perpetrator is over 18. (There is an exception for crimes which involve fondling "not through clothing," these acts may be "sexual abuse of a minor" but will not be "crimes of violence.") Designation of "crime of violence" requires convicted offenders to serve half of their sentence before being eligible for parole. Currently, the law requires these offenders to serve only one-third of their sentence. The new law will also require minimum sentences for repeat offenders, and create parity between sexual abuse of a minor and other serious crimes.

**Human Trafficking and Involuntary Servitude (HB876/SB606)** - This bill amends current laws on sexual solicitation of a minor, extortion, and pandering to assure that prosecutors have the tools to convict those who engage in human trafficking. Of particular note, "pandering" will be more accurately named "human trafficking." Human trafficking of a child will be a felony with up to a 25 year / \$15,000 fine penalty and the law will recognize that immigration status can be used as a tool of extortion.

The current law **Paternity & Rapists (HB648/SB679)** gives rapists who cause a child to be conceived the same rights as other biological parents. Additionally, if a rapist-parent cannot be located, current law requires that the victim's name be published in the newspaper.



These bills would have limited the parental rights of rapists when the child was conceived through rape and would increase protections for rape survivors who have a child as a result of rape. The bill was supported but failed by the General Assembly.



## Just a thought...

(continued from page 1)

It is the goal of the Center to provide the victim and the witnesses with a better understanding of the criminal justice system and to make this process as painless as possible. Above all, we must strive to avoid and prevent revictimization throughout every stage of the process. Our team of professionals work consistently and persistently to minimize the most horrific and traumatic experience a child may encounter and are always willing to do a little more than is required to protect these young victims. I am very proud to be a member of one of the most qualified, experienced, and skilled team of professionals.

**Linda Sweeney is the Family Advocate at the Harford County Justice Center's Child Advocacy Unit.**

## Save the Date

**Despite the frigid temperatures that accompany the winter months, the calendar is definitely heating up with lots of great events!**

### **RVAAM Advanced Training on Mental Health Issues of Victims and Victim Service Providers**

Tuesday, February 26th; 9:00am - 5:00pm, University of Baltimore

Join us for an all-day training led by Lisa Ferentz, LCSW-C, to learn how to better meet the mental health needs of crime victims, as well as be able to care for yourself in this highly stressful occupation. The event is FREE to all RVAAM alumni.

Registration is open until February 15th. For more information, please contact Elaine Witman at [elaine.witman@sidran.org](mailto:elaine.witman@sidran.org)

## Hot Topics

"Happy New Year!"

These are the words of greeting that we share with one another during this time of year. It's a time of new beginnings, of wiping the slate clean from the previous year in both our personal and professional lives. It's also a time for resolutions; those goals we set for ourselves each year on January 1st that the experts have found are usually broken by January 31st. We want to prove those experts wrong! We have a resolution that each of you can make and NOT break because it is simple to fulfill. This resolution is for each of you to participate in our annual "Power of One-to-One" recruitment campaign which request that every alum recruit one person to apply for the 2008 Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland.

This campaign has been utilized by the RVAAM Alumni Association for the past few years to help get the word out about the Academy. While there is a Marketing Committee, whose charge it is to provide outreach regarding the upcoming Academy each year, the best form of advertising is with you, the Alumni. Who would know better about the benefits of attending than those who have already attended? Your recommendation speaks volumes to a potential applicant, and in turn also allows you to serve as a mentor to that person before and during their attendance at the Academy.

So, this year we ask you to resolve to be a voice for the 2008 Academy. Share your experiences with someone you know who could benefit from attending; and help us identify agencies or organizations who have not been participating. Direct potential applicants to the RVAAM website at <http://rvaam.ubalt.edu> or have them contact Dr. Debra Stanley at [dstanley@ubalt.edu](mailto:dstanley@ubalt.edu) or at [rvvam@mac.com](mailto:rvvam@mac.com) for more information.

We look forward to seeing all of you this year, and wish you and yours a very Happy New Year!

## Alumni Updates

*It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye another year has almost passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...*

**Cori Brooks (2007)** - This past October Cori realized her dream of starting a career in victim services when she was hired as a Victim Advocate at the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center. Cori will also be finishing up her Masters degree in Criminal Justice this year at the University of Baltimore. Good luck Cori!

**Angela Giles (2006)** - Angela, the Victim Services Associate for the Department of Corrections, was named "Employee of the Quarter." Congratulations Angela!!

**Debbie Neighoff (2005) & Patricia Fisher (2006)** - This past October Debbie and Patricia attended the first annual NAVSPIC conference (National Association of Victim Service Professionals in Corrections) in Orlando, Florida. The conference, sponsored by OVC and Appriss, highlighted policy and program developments to improve victim satisfaction with Corrections.

**Nicole Quinn (2006)** - Nicole celebrated her 30th birthday on November 9th. Happy Birthday Nicole, and we wish you many more!

**Tina Shankle (2005)** - We send out more birthday wishes to Tina who celebrated her birthday on December 16th. May it be a wonderful year for you Tina!



## Save the Date

(Continued from page 3)

### 2008 National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 13th - 19th, 2008

Theme: "Justice for Victims, Justice for All"

To ensure that you receive your free copy of the 2008 NCVRW Resource Guide and 2008 NCVRW Theme Poster, please sign up at [http://puborder.ncjrs.gov/listservs/subscribe\\_NCVRW.asp](http://puborder.ncjrs.gov/listservs/subscribe_NCVRW.asp)

### 2008 Roper Victim Assistance Academy

June 2nd- 6th, 2008; Maryland Public Safety Education & Training Center, Sykesville, MD.

For more information go to <http://rvaam.ubalt.edu>

### 34th Annual NOVA Conference

September 28 - October 3, 2008; The Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky

Theme: "Advocacy: Turning Survivors into Thrivers"

## Alumni Directory

Please help us keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information has changed, please contact Debbie Bradley via email at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 836-5490. We will then publish those changes in the following newsletter.

## We Need Your Help!

The Academy Forum is looking for volunteers to serve as Assistant Editors. Responsibilities include contacting RVAAM alumni for information and updates, preparing the 20/20 section of the newsletter each quarter on a different member, and providing current, useful websites to the victim services field. If you are interested, please contact Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

## A Funding Opportunity: OVC's Helping Outreach Programs to Expand (HOPE) Grant Program

Since the program was launched in November 2002, OVC has offered grants to grassroots, nonprofit, community- and faith-based victim organizations and coalitions to improve outreach and services to victims of crime.

### Background

Through a series of roundtable meetings with crime victims and victim advocates, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has become aware of a growing body of grassroots, nonprofit, community- and faith-based victim organizations and coalitions that are not linked to mainstream victim service programs. As such, they do not have access to traditional funding sources for services, outreach, and networking. Often only a small amount of money and access to resources are needed to expand and enhance their outreach and services to crime victims.

### What Is Helping Outreach Programs to Expand?

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime will provide up to \$10,000 each to grassroots community- and faith-based victim service organizations and coalitions to help them improve their outreach and services to crime victims, through support of program development, networking, coalition building, and service delivery. Funds may be used to develop program literature, train advocates, produce a newsletter, support victim outreach efforts, and recruit volunteers.

### Who Can Apply?

Organizations and coalitions operating for at least 1 year that have not received federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) victim assistance grant funding and that have an annual operating budget of \$50,000 or less are eligible to apply. All applicants must also have a history of serving crime victims.

### How To Apply?

Interested organizations should submit a letter of request on the agency's letterhead to the OVC Director. The letter should include the following:

- Organization or coalition's mission statement.
- Background information about the organization or coalition (e.g., how long in existence, names and titles of principal staff).
- Breakdown of annual operating budget.
- Description of activities and crime victim services.
- Statement of need.
- Breakdown of intended uses of funds.
- Three original letters of support. They may be from law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, and/or established victim services agencies on the recommending agency's letterhead. The letters of support must address the work that the program does with victims of crime in the community and must be dated within the past 12 months.

### Examples of Successful (OVC-Funded) Initiatives

Since November 2002, funds have supported a range of outreach and victim service expansion efforts, including:

- Production of a public service announcement featuring the victim service organization's contact information to be displayed in local movie theatres.
- Translation of domestic violence brochures from English to Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese, and Farsi.
- Establishment of a 24-hour crisis hotline.

For more information about the HOPE Grant Program, go to OVC's website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/fund/expandingoutreach/welcome.html>

# The 20 / 20

*Each newsletter we pose twenty questions to one of our members to get an inside look at who they are ... this month get to know Jill Ritter, a graduate of the 2005 Academy*

**My favorite sound is...**  
a child's giggle

**The last book I read was...**  
*Honest, Direct, Respectful*

**My favorite time of day is ...**  
supper time, when all my family is present

**The best piece of advice I ever got was ...**  
be yourself!

**My greatest accomplishment (so far) has been...**  
raising my children

**My childhood ambition was ...**  
to be just like my mother

**The biggest challenge for me is ...**  
not speaking my mind

**If I had to choose an animal that symbolizes my personality, it would be a ...**  
my dog, who is always happy and loveable!

**The soundtrack that best exemplifies my life is ...**  
anything by Martina McBride

**My favorite food is ...**  
French fries

**The perfect day to me would be ...**  
not arguing with my prosecutors (or my teenage daughter)

**If I could invite any three people (alive or deceased) to dinner, it would be...**  
my grandfather and my parents

**My favorite indulgence is...**  
lots of popcorn with a beer

**I appreciate ...**  
a simple thank you

**The occupation, other than the one I am currently in, I would want is...**  
a professional photographer

**The occupation I would most certainly not like to have is...**  
a prosecutor

**The three words that best describe my life are ...**  
happy, loveable, ambitious

**My fondest memory is ...**  
time spent talking with my grandfather

**My wildest dream...**  
is watching my daughter play for the Ladies U.S. Soccer Team and my son play for the Philadelphia Eagles

**One of my goals for 2008 is...**  
not holler so much at my teenage daughter

## Occupational Outlook



The U. S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland is advertising for a Victim Witness Program Assistant, GS-308-8 position, in the Baltimore office. The full performance level of the position is GS-8. This OPM announcement is open to all U.S. Citizens and is specifically for non-status individuals, which means that applicants do not have to be federal employees to apply. The closing date for applications is January 17, 2008.

For more information, you can review the job announcement at:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.gov/getjob.asp?JobID=66894825&brd=3876&AVSDM=2008-01-04+00:00:05&sort=rv&vw=d&Logo=0&FedPub=Y&lid=17794&FedEmp=N&SUBMIT1.x=101&SUBMIT1.y=18&paygrademin=8&paygrademax=8&ss=0&TabNum=6&rc=>

## Editorial Board

**Debbie (Creswell) Bradley — Editor**  
**Bonnie Robertson — Assistant Editor**  
**Heather Courtney - Assistant Editor**  
**Heather Pfeifer — Art Director/Layout**

**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2008**