

# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #43- April 2017

## Just a Thought

Learn about the mission of the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN), and some of the key initiatives it has launched over the past six years to assist members' professional development and to strengthen the professional standards of the field of victim services

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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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## Save the Date!

Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy during the next few months!

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## Alumni Showcase

Read Sherry Jones' essay on overseeing Maryland's Interstate Compact for Juveniles, and how she thinks the juvenile justice system is working to better meet the needs of vulnerable youth .

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## Certification News

Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section lays out the criteria of each level of certification, along with the requirements .

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## News From the Field

It's always important to try to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. Read about two bills that are were recently passed.

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## Just a thought...

### *Making a Difference*

#### *The Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN)*

One of the most unique features of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland (RVAAM) is that it has a beginning but does not have an end. Rather, it is a cyclical organization and a source of renewable human energy. A clear cut representation of this pattern is its powerful alumni association, the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN).

Since its inception in 2004, RVAAM has made a concerted effort to find ways to support its attendees after completing the week-long academy. In 2005, the Academy took steps to create an alumni association that would provide continued professional and personal support for its

graduates. Shortly afterwards, the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN) was formalized. At the conclusion of every Academy, students are immediately inducted into VSPN after graduation, and are warmly welcomed into a family of hundreds of professionals who reside in every jurisdiction across the state of Maryland.

The mission of VSPN is to support the Academy, as well as to utilize a forward thinking approach to improving victim advocacy through individual and professional growth. As such, over the years, VSPN has helped to facilitate advanced trainings to enhance members capacity to assist victims of crime, organize networking initiatives to foster greater collaboration across agencies and jurisdictions, share employment opportunities, and participate in a range of service projects to engage and uplift the community. For example, VSPN donates the proceeds from its annual holiday par-



ty to at least one family in need of assistance.

One of the most important initiatives VSPN initiatives, however, has been the development of a formal victim advocate certification program. This three-level certification program has helped to articulate standards for those who are just entering the field of victim services, as well as for those who are seasoned veterans. The goal of this initiative has been to push for greater levels of professional standards in the field of victim services, and thereby help to improve the breadth and quality of services victims of crime receive. These efforts have not gone unnoticed. Just recently, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office announced that *all* of their victim advocates must be certified. One can only hope more agencies will follow suit in the near future. For more information about the certification program and process, individuals may reach out to Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Happy New Year Alum!

I don't know about you, but I just love the beginning of a new year! It marks a new beginning - a refresher if you will. And as we begin a new year, we have an opportunity to set new goals, both personal and professional. I hope that one of your goals this year will be to become a **certified** Victim Assistance Specialist. It was recently brought to my attention that the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office is now requiring all of their advocates to be certified in Maryland. Hopefully, more agencies around the state will follow suit. So, set a goal for yourself this year to get certified and rise a step above the rest.

As many of you know, one of the requirements for certification is to complete 40 hours of training in victim assistance. Completion of the RVAAM Academy satisfies this requirement. Why not share this information with your peers, and then refer them to this year's Academy? The Academy will run from June 5-9th. Unfortunately, the RVAAM website is not functioning at this time, but you can request a copy of the application from Ms. Linda Garnett at [lgarnett@ubalt.edu](mailto:lgarnett@ubalt.edu). And since we can all do with some refreshers now and again, why not think about attending the Academy again yourself? Every year I sit in on the Academy and end up learning something new and exciting. So don't miss out on this chance to further your own professional development.

It is my goal this year to have lots of exciting things in store for the alumni, so keep watching your email to find out what events and activities we have in store for you!

*I wish each of you a very prosperous new year!*

*Until next time ...*

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

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*Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365 page book. Write a good one. ~ Brad Paisley*



• **Tyrone Garnett (Class of 2015)** - It is with great sadness that we announce that Tyrone passed away prior to Thanksgiving. As you all may know, Tyrone was the loving husband to Linda Garnett, our beloved staff administrator and alumni of the Academy. Our heart and prayers goes out to Linda, and to all of her and Tyrone's extended family members. While he will be greatly missed, his wonderful spirit and smile will never be forgotten.

• **Dave Thomas (RVAAM Faculty)** - It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Dave's father, George B. Thomas, on Christmas day. George was a nationally renowned educator in Montgomery County, who believed "education was the great equalizer." He was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, and we know he will be greatly missed by all who loved him. Our prayers are with you, Dave, and with your family.



Just a Thought (Cont.)

Robert F. Kennedy wisely stated, "the purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better." VSPN exemplifies this statement by functioning as an organization which inspires noble service and serves as a sterling example of what an advocacy association should be.

*Essay contributed by Keith Gethers*

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. Here are a few sites that relate to this issue's "Just a Thought" ... happy surfing!*

OVC Victim Assistance Training (VAT) Online

VAT Online is a foundational Web-based victim assistance training program that offers victim service providers and allied professionals the opportunity to acquire the essential skills and knowledge they need to more effectively assist victims of crime. VAT Online has four sections: Basics, Core Competencies and Skills, Crimes, and Specific Considerations for Providing Victim Services. This training meets the requirements for the Introductory Advocacy Training area that can be used to apply for the National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP). To see a complete list of the training modules, and to learn more, go to: <https://www.ovcttac.gov/>

[views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline\\_VA-TOline.cfm](http://www.mdcsl.org/views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline_VA-TOline.cfm)

## Maryland Community Services Locator

The online tool helps victims connect with over 9,000 health, social service and criminal justice resource programs in Maryland. The database also provides service information, maps, and driving directions to programs. To learn more, go to <http://www.mdcsl.org/search.html>

## 2-1-1 Maryland

2-1-1 Maryland connects individuals to health and human service resources in their community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 180 languages. To learn more, go to: <http://www.211md.org>

## Save the Date

### 2017 RVAAM Academy

June 5th-9th, 2017,  
Bon Secours Spiritual  
Retreat Center, Mar-  
riottsville, MD

Mark your calendars!  
The 13th annual  
RVAAM Academy is  
scheduled for the first  
week of June at the lovely Bon Secours. Email Linda Garnett at [lgarnett@ubalt.edu](mailto:lgarnett@ubalt.edu) to request a copy of this year's application and pass it along to your colleagues!



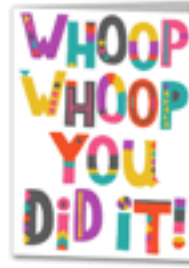
### 43rd Annual NOVA Training Event

August 14th-17th, 2017, Sheraton  
San Diego Hotel and Marina, San  
Diego, CA

Early bird registrations are now being accepted. Go to <http://www.trynova.org/nova-training-event/overview/> to get more information.

## 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 passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alumni have experienced since we last met...*



### Look at Our Movers & Shakers!

- **Tammy Daniels (Class of 2016)** - Tammy and her daughter, Ashanti, are now graduates from the University of Baltimore! Tammy earned her BA in Interdisciplinary Studies: Criminal Justice, English, & Human Services, and Ashanti earned her MS in Health Systems Management. What an amazing accomplishment - congratulations to you both!
- **Christian Fox (Class of 2012)** - Christian recently returned from the UK with her Master's and is now working at the Maryland Crime Victim's Resource Center. Congratulations Christian on earning your degree and your new job!
- **Tina (Shankle) McKnight (Class of 2005)** - Tina celebrated her birthday on December 16th, so next time you see her, be sure to wish her a belated happy birthday!

## Alumni Showcase

### Seeking Justice for Juveniles

As the Administrator and Commissioner for the Maryland Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) and certified Adult Mental Health First Aid

Responder, I oversee the daily operation of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) ICJ Office. For those of you who are unfamiliar with ICJ, it is the only legal mechanism whereby delinquent and non-delinquent youth may be transported from state to state.

Under the ICJ Compact, youth who have been adjudicated delinquent and have been placed on probation or parole, may leave a state (e.g., the sending/home state) to reside with a parent or guardian in another state (e.g., receiving state). While in the receiving state, the youth will be under "courtesy supervision" of a case manager/probation officer, who is then responsible for sending progress reports to the original jurisdiction until the youth's probation or parole/after-care term is complete.

As the Administrator and Commissioner of ICJ, I am responsible for co-



ordinating the safe and timely return of runaways, absconders, delinquent, and non-delinquent youth. Some of these youth have fled the state of Maryland or neighboring states to avoid prosecution, or have escaped from a facility. In addition, I manage the ICJ Advisory Committee, and provide technical assistance to DJS field staff, judges, and other court personnel. On a regular basis, our office partners with several agencies and stakeholders, including the Maryland Trafficking Victim Services Committee. Members meet regularly to coordinate the return of sex trafficking victims from and/or returning to the state of Maryland, in an effort to ensure that

the respondent(s) are linked to the appropriate agency in a time fashion.

Although I get frustrated when Maryland citizens fail to respect the ICJ laws and policies. When that happens, both the youth and his or her guardian(s) are not granted an opportunity to utilize all of the resources afforded them through the ICJ, I am more encouraged today in some of the changes or shifts I have seen in the philosophy within the system towards how we are to work with at-risk youth. The system is no longer solely focused on punishing delinquent youth and treating them like criminals. Moreover, the system is focusing more on the emotional, physical, and mental health of both perpetrators and victims. Consequently, there has been greater collaboration with community stakeholders and youth agencies to ensure that staff receive training on trauma-informed care. I believe this shift in attitude has greatly improved how the juvenile justice system has responded to juvenile offenders, as well as victims. I strongly believe, however, that more work needs to be done. Many victims of child sexual abuse continue to fall through the cracks because of the lack of funding and resources. In particular, I believe advocates and other juvenile justice officials need to pay more careful attention to the male victims of child sexual abuse, particularly African American males, in order to more effectively reduce the incidence of domestic violence and other crimes against women and children.

I believe the key to effectively working with youth, in whatever capacity your job entails, is to remain "present" when you interact with these children. It is equally, if not more important, to hear *what is not being said* during your conversation with them. You need to approach each youth in a nonjudgmental way, and treat them (be it an offender or a victim) in the same manner you would wish to be treated if you were in their shoes. We must love

these youth past their pain, disappointment, torture, failures, and self-hatred, and instead, show them in our words and deeds a more loving, and compassionate response. Because love is what rebuilds, heals, and restores broken hearts and spirits.

*Essay contributed by Sherry Jones (Class of 2015).*

## Certification News

*Do you want to be more recognized in the field of Victim Services? Do you want to show people that you are a cut above the rest? Then become a certified Victim Assistance Specialist in the State of Maryland! Social Workers started here too and look how far they have come over the past 10 years!*

*Victim Service Professionals need to unite and do the same thing - so take this important step for your career. Go to [www.rvaam.org](http://www.rvaam.org) to learn more about the certification process and download a copy of the application today!*

***There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:***

**\* Level I (VASI)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) multiple choice exam; e) \$50 application processing fee

**\* Level II (VASII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights

training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay / short answer exam; e) \$75 application processing fee.

**\* Level III (VASIII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.

***There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates who want to remain current with their certification:***

**\* Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.

**\* Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete written exam; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.

**\* Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete oral presentation; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.



All application materials and study guides for the written exams are available online at [www.rvaam.org](http://www.rvaam.org) (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming prep classes, as well as classes on ethics for renewals. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

**Coming Soon in 2017! A 3-hour class for Ethics in Victim Services ... keep an eye out for details!**



**News From The Field**

**U.S. Senate Bill S. 2577: The Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2016** - On Wednesday, December 7th, 2016, the United States Senate passed JARA. This law amends the Justice for All Act of 2004, the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, the DNA Sexual Assault Act of 2004, and the Innocence Protection Act of 2004 to do the following:

- reauthorize grants over the 2017-2021 period for victims assistance programs;
- reauthorize crime victim notification grants;
- amend the federal criminal code to require a defendant, as a mandatory condition of supervised release, to pay court-ordered restitution;
- give preference to Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Program grant appli-

cants that use funds for forensic nurse examiner programs in rural or underserved areas;

- reauthorize DNA research and development demonstration grants, DNA programs and activities at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and DNA technology grants to identify missing persons;
- reauthorize the Capital Litigation Improvement Grant Program;
- reauthorize the Kirk Bloodsworth Post-Conviction DNA Testing Grant Program, and direct the National Institute of Justice to establish best practices for evidence retention.

This legislation has been forwarded to the White House for the President’s consideration and signature.

In November, 2016, Governor Larry Hogan announced that over 46 million dollars of federal money, from the Victims of Crime Act, would be dispersed to various local and state agencies and nonprofit organizations to assist victims of crime with needed services and treatment. The Governor made the announcement at the Center for Children, a nonprofit organization that concentrates on providing mental health services to children and their families. He was joined by Steven J. Kelley, Chairman of the Maryland State Board of Victim Services, Catherine Meyers, Director of the Center for Children, and many other victims advocates. This announcement caps off a year of progress by legislators, both in the House and the Senate, who worked together to ensure laws were passed that further protect and compensate victims of crime. The General Assembly has adjourned and will reconvene on January 11, 2017. Let us make a goal for the new year to continue to fight for the victims we serve, and to remind our elected officials of their obligation to protect and serve all of the citizens of Maryland.

**Thoughts, Ideas, Suggestions?**

Are you looking for more information about a particular issue in the field of victim services? The Editorial Board is always looking for new topics to profile in the newsletter that can assist our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might for a future topic to Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org). And remember, we are also happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!

**Alumni Directory**

The 2016 Alumni Directory, which includes the addition of the most recent Academy class members is now available for distribution. However, we still would like your help to keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information changes, please contact Debbie Bradley via email at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 836-5490.



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**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2017**