

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #1 - January 2006

Just a Thought

Roberta Roper shares her thoughts on how far we've come in the evolution of victims rights on the national and state levels and shares her dream of the future in victims rights and services

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

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Just a thought...

Serving Crime Victims: The Past, The Present, The Future

Roberta Roper

The ending of one year and the beginning of the next presents a timely opportunity for each of us to take an inventory of our personal and professional lives. This is especially important for those in the field of crime victim services who have been involved with or benefitted from the training offered through the Roper Victim Assistance Academy and how it is sustained for the future. Each of us needs to appreciate where we are today, what has been accomplished in the past, and what goals remain that must guide and direct our future course in order to better meet the needs of all victims of crime

Our Past

2005 marked the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week and the establishment of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime to address the needs of millions of Americans and their



families victimized by crime. These two events stand as milestones to mark a journey of national and state achievements that have been nothing short of extraordinary. From a 1982 Task Force Report that described the treatment of crime victims as 'institutionalizes disinterest,' we have today a wealth of laws in every state providing victims rights in the criminal justice process, and services that enable them to rebuild lives shattered by crime's consequences. Truly this progress represents the collective moral voice of a free society and the great vision of America that seeks "equal justice under the law."

Our Present

Our own state stands on the cutting edge of this extraordinary progress. In less than two decades,

Maryland has been transformed from a state that provided *no* rights for crime victims, *no* community based support services, *no* counseling for crime victims to one in which crime victims have statutory and constitutional rights to be informed and to participate in criminal justice proceedings from pre-trial to sentencing, from appeals to parole, criminal injuries compensation, and a host of community resources. The most significant achievement was the passage of the Maryland State Constitutional Amendment in 1994 establishing constitutional rights and *legal standing* to assert those rights.

Additional progress is reflected in that every State's Attorney's Office has a program of victim assistance, often working in collaboration with community service providers. There is a State Board of Victims Services in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention whose responsibilities include training and compliance of victims' rights, and the awarding of grants to provide victims services. In 2004, a statewide victim assistance academy was launched in honor of our daughter, Stephanie, to provide professional training to all who serve crime victims in Maryland. The federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) enacted by Congress in 1984 created a fund to provide direct support services to crime victims that is funded by fines, forfeitures and fees levied against convicted federal criminal offenders. As a result, more than 70 agencies across our state receive VOCA funds to serve approximately 41,000 victims.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

RVAAM Alumni - welcome to the inaugural issue of the Academy Forum. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. I know I am looking forward to getting back to a more even keel (if that's possible in our business?!).

The Academy Forum is intended to keep all of the RVAAM alumni connected

I would like to thank the newsletter staff for all their hard work in helping to get us off and running. We were operating under a bit of a time crunch to get this produced on time and each and every one of the staff did an amazing job. Thanks to Sharon Leasure for surfing the net to find some useful internet resources and sites for our "Web Links" and for tracking down the latest gossip on our alums for our "Alumni Updates." Thanks to Jen Weber for compiling information on all the upcoming special events and trainings highlighted in our "Save the Date" section, as well as information on new job opportunities listed in our "Occupational Outlook" section. A special thanks to her as well for stepping in at the last minute to compile the information for both the "News From the Field" and "Hot Topics" sections to cover for Eileen Katrick who had a medical emergency. We wish a speedy recovery to Eileen and look forward to her contributions in newsletters to come. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Roberta Roper for being our guest author for our "Just a Thought..." section. How appropriate that Roberta be a part of RVAAM's first newsletter. And finally, I would like to thank Heather Pfeifer for taking all the pieces of the puzzle and putting the newsletter together in its current format.

As the Academy Forum is intended to help keep all of the RVAAM alumni connected, we encourage you to help us keep everyone informed of important issues, legislative or policy changes, and new resources you come across in your community. We also would love to just hear about what you are up to! We look forward to hearing from you!

Wishing you all the best in 2006!

Debbie Creswell, Editor

creswell@harfordsherriff.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!

www.mdcrimevictims.org - provides information about all the laws in Maryland regarding victims' rights, along with other useful information.

www.health.umd.edu/services/victimadvocate.htm - University of Maryland's on-line support for victims of sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking and partner/dating violence.

www.vaonline.org - Victim Assistance Online is an information, research and networking resource for victim assistance specialists, professionals in related disciplines and anyone interested in the field of victimology.

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ncvrw/vsolinks.htm - provides links to national victims services related organizations.

www.mnadv.org/links.htm - list of victims services related links hosted on the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence website.

www.witnessjustice.org/about/whoweare.cfm - a committed team working to make a difference for survivors of violent crime everywhere. Witness justice has a passion for victims rights and services, along with a personal desire to see victims heal and achieve justice.

www.talkjustice.com - a web forum that provides the opportunity for academics, practitioners, students, and citizens to discuss a wide range of criminal justice related issues. Also provides numerous links to other criminal justice related websites and research databases.

www.valor-national.org - the Victim Assistance Legal Organization's web-page that provides useful links to victims services organizations and federal agencies and resources.

News From the Field

Everyone knows that the field of victims services is always evolving. The challenge is to find a way to keep on top of all the changes ... we're here to help! Here's an overview of just some of the most recent legislative changes:

Criminal Law Section 9-302 "Harming/Threatening Another with Intent to Influence a Witness" - a) amended so that witness does not have to have been summoned, by including 'report facts of a crime.' b) added solicitation to intimidate witness; c) added 20 year sentence for

intimidation related to certain felonies. Consecutive sentence.

Criminal Law Section 9-303 "Harming of Threatening Another with Intent to Retaliate Against a Witness" - a) added solicitation to retaliate against a witness; b) added a 20 year sentence for retaliation related to certain felonies. Sentence may be separate or consecutive.

Criminal Law Section 9-305 "Harming or Threatening Another with Intent to Influence a Juror or Officer of the Court" - a) added solicitation to commit this crime; b) added officer of United States; c) added 20 year sentence for intimidation relating to proceeding for certain felonies.



Criminal Law Article 3-403 - a) amends law to make robbery with a note claiming to have a 'dangerous' weapon to "Robbery with a Dangerous and

Deadly Weapon;" b) Amends penalty from 15 to 20 years.

Criminal Law Section 10-117 - was amended to increase the penalty for one who provides alcohol to underage persons from \$500 to \$1,000.

Family Law Article 4-501 - The definition of abuse for which a protective order may be sought in instances of domestic violence has been expanded to include 'stalking' under CR 3-802.

Save the Date

2006 is shaping up to be a busy year for RVAAM. We are particularly excited about our new location for this year's Academy - the Maryland Public Safety Education & Training Center in Sykesville. It is definitely a sight to behold! We hope you will be able to join us for the different events....

Advanced Training - "Illuminations" with Father Ray Chase

January 19 - January 20, 2006

Hosted at the Maryland Public Safety Education & Training Center

Day I: 9:00am - 7:00pm

Day II: 8:30am - 2:30pm

For more information, contact Debra Stanley at dstanley@ubalt.edu

Roper Victim Assistance Academy 2006

June 5 - June 9, 2006

Hosted at the Maryland Public Safety Education & Training Center



Just a thought...

(continued from page 1)

In October 2004, the strongest federal statute in our nation's history was signed into law. The *Justice for All Act of 2004* is named for five homicide victims (including Stephanie) and provides enforceable rights, documentation and compliance remedies to federal crime victims. While falling short of the of the proposed U.S. Constitutional Amendment believed by many to as necessary to ensure rights, this legislation was accepted as a reasonable compromise.

Our Future

So what does our future hold? My personal dream is for a day when victims' rights are included in our nation's fundamental law ... its Constitution. That these rights will be so ingrained in the fabric of our nation's law that they will be applied as routinely as those that are afforded to individuals who are accused of a crime; that law school curriculums will include victims' rights and attorneys' bar exams will require knowledge of these rights; that all criminal justice agencies will treat crime victims with the respect and dignity they deserve; that Maryland will have a distinguished and certified field of professional service providers who not only understand the requirements of the law and strive to empower the crime victims they serve to use them, but serve them as they themselves would wish to be served if the victim was their loved one.

This vision is dependent upon a permanent state academy whose curriculum is solidly built upon Maryland victims' rights laws, a compassionate understanding of the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of victims, and competent resources to assist them.

There is strength in unity. With the collective talents of those dedicated to this dream, I am confident that it will become a reality.

Hot Topics

One of the more important and challenging issues facing victim services is the 'professionalization' of the field. By implementing such standards, victims of crime are ensured to not only receive the services they need, but will be treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve. RVAAM has initiated the movement towards professionalization of victim service providers in the state of Maryland but without permanent funding the Academy is at risk of shutting its doors. Therefore, the need to demonstrate to the state legislature its importance to achieving this goal

This year we are challenging every alumni to participate in our "Power of One to One" campaign by recruiting at least ONE person for the 2006 Academy. As you are out and about, please spread the word to your colleagues - mention the RVAAM website to any interested individual (<http://rvaam.ubalt.edu>). They can download the application on-line or email Deb Stanley at any time to ask for a hard copy (her email address is dstanley@ubalt.edu).

To assist you with your recruiting efforts and in the spirit of diversity, here are few suggestions of individuals who could benefit from the Academy:

Law Enforcement (local, state, federal), Corrections, Parole & Probation, States Attorney Offices, Juvenile Services, Mental Health Providers, Addictions / Substance Abuse Providers, Faith Community Leaders / Clergy, Social Workers, Social Services / Child Protective Services / Foster Care, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Abuse, Child Advocacy Centers, Judges.

This is by no means an all inclusive list! We're sure you can think of other professionals who could benefit from the knowledge and training provided by RVAAM. If you have any questions about potential recruits, please contact Kim Vasco (kvasco@co.ho.md.us) or Elaine Witman (elainewitman@yahoo.com). Help us spread the word!

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...

Valda Rotolo - Class of 2004; Cecil County Child Advocacy Center. Part of the role of Advocates for CCCAC is to support not only the families involved in child sexual abuse cases but also the families when a child dies. Historically it is SIDS deaths, but Valda was asked to assist in a murder case, and as a result received an award from the State's Attorney's Office and a Sheriff's Salute for going beyond the call of duty for work on the same murder case. Valda provided Victim Advocate services for the parents of a murdered young man. Because of the knowledge and experience gained from attending the Roper Victim Assistance Academy, Valda was better able to inform the family of their rights and responsibilities. In addition, the mother of the murdered young man will be attending the Mid-Atlantic Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect held each year in Ocean City with Valda to speak about the value of impact statements and how they impact the court. There will be a panel presenting that deal with Victims Services to include non-offending caregivers from the Cecil County Non-Offending Caregivers Support Group (*Debbie Chaplin, Class of 2005*, will be on the panel). This is the first year that the panel has been given a full day in Ocean City at the Maryland Children's Alliance Conference.

Tina Shankle - Class of 2005; DOC Victim Services. Wish Tina a "Happy Birthday," she celebrated it on December 16th!

Jennifer Weber - Class of 2005; Harford County Sheriff's Office, Warrant/Fugitive Unit - Send your congratulations to Jen! She is graduating this month from the University of Baltimore with her Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice. Way to go!

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 Heather Pfeifer, one of the RVAAM faculty

My favorite sound is...

My girls laughing

because I need to keep this "PG," at the moment I would go with "snap"

My childhood nickname was...

Toad - don't ask

If I could learn any language, it would be...

A Native American dialect - the one I'm intrigued with is Sloux

The last book I read was...

Memoirs of a Geisha - wow!

My least favorite thing to do is...

Cleaning bathrooms - but I do it!

My greatest accomplishment (so far) has been...

Raising compassionate children

My favorite time of day is...

When everyone in my house has gone to bed and the house is quiet. Then I make a cup of tea and retreat to my office to work

I can't stand...

Bigotry and intolerance

My favorite retreat...

Curled up in bed with a good book

My favorite word is...

Depends on my mood - and

I appreciate...

People who are patient - I'm not one of them!

My favorite indulgence is...

A deep tissue massage and Godiva chocolates ... I couldn't pick just one!

If I could invite any three people (alive or deceased) to dinner, it would be...

My brother because he would know how to keep the conversation going and would keep the mood light; the Dahli Lama because I've always been curious about his life; and my grandfather because I never had the chance to meet him

Best piece of advice I ever got was...

From one of my professors in graduate school...when things get really overwhelming, take

the 'helicopter' view of the situation - look at the 'big' picture rather than get lost in all the details.

The occupation, other than the one I am currently in, I would want is...

A professional piano player and singer (like Diana Krall or Norah Jones).

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

Anything that would put me behind a desk and would limit my independence.

If I had to choose an animal that symbolizes my personality, it would be a...

Lioness (my family, however, says Pitbull)

My motto or favorite saying is...

"Sail Fast, Live Slow" - ironic because I don't sail, but I love the sentiment.

If I could go anywhere in the world, it would be...

Italy - first, all the major cities to enjoy their art and architecture, and then meander through the countryside to enjoy the people, the beauty, and the wine!

One of my goals for 2006 is...

To help RVAAM achieve sustainability and become a permanent training academy for victim services in the state of Maryland

Occupational Outlook



Casework Specialist, Criminal Justice

05-2002-001

Salary: \$33,970 - \$52,224

Closing Date: Open and Continuous

Position Duties: Casework specialist providing clinical and therapeutic social work services in a criminal justice environment.

Minimum Qualifications: Masters degree in Social Work; no prior work experience.

For more information, go to

http://www.dbm.maryland.gov/dbm_publishing/public_content/dbm_taxonomy/state_jobs/current_recruitments/jobs_listing.html

Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2006

Editorial Board

- Debbie Creswell — Editor**
- Jen Weber — Assistant Editor**
- Sharon Leasure — Assistant Editor**
- Eileen Katrick — Assistant Editor**
- Heather Pfeifer — Art Director/Layout**

Alumni Directory

Please help us finish the 2004-2005 Alumni Directory! If you have not updated your personal information please contact Debbie Creswell via email at creswell@harford.sheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490 and provide the following: your name, your place of employment, your business address, your business phone, your business fax, your home phone, your cell phone, and your email address.

Our goal is to be able to distribute this directory electronically to all alums and update it annually so we can stay in touch!