

# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #7 - July 2007

## Just a Thought

Learn about the different programs the DOC has implemented to help protect the rights of Maryland's crime victims. Debbie Neighoff describes the Victim Services Unit within the DOC.  
**Page 1**

## Web Links

You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered  
**Page 2**



## News From the Field

Read about some of the most recent legislative changes affecting victim services  
**Page 2**

## Hot Topics



Learn about an invaluable resource for domestic violence victims, the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program!  
**Page 3**

## 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.  
**Page 3**

## The 20/20

Each newsletter get an inside look at one of the RVAAM peers - 20 questions, 20 unique answers  
**Page 5**



## Just a thought...

### *Victim Services in the Division of Corrections*

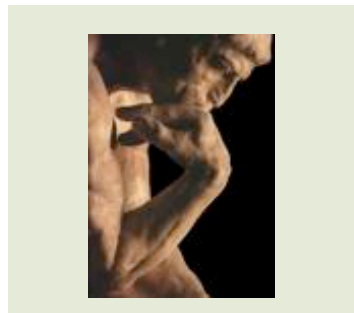
#### Debbie Neighoff

The Division of Corrections' Victim Services Unit was one of the first in the country to promote the idea of having trained victim representatives in most of its prisons. The Institutional Victim Advisory Committee, which was established in 1998, was created because of the realization that more and more victims were coming into our prisons for open parole hearings, tours, and participation on our victim impact panels.

#### Victim Services in the DOC

The Division of Corrections Victim Services Unit consists of one director, one assistant director, and two victim associates. The unit is primarily responsible for processing Crime Victims Notification Request Forms (CVNRF) and victim impact statements. Once a CVNRF is received, the Victim Services Unit will send a letter to the victim confirming receipt of

their request, along with information about the inmate's location, DOC identification number, housing location, VINE, and victim impact statements. Crime Victim Notification Request Forms are extremely important for victims to fill out and turn in to their State's Attorney's Office because without them,



the DOC Victim Services Unit cannot provide any inmate information to the victim. Victim impact statements are also very important documents in the DOC, as they are used to consider where an inmate is housed, whether or not they should be in any special programs, as well to help inform parole hearings. The Victim Services Unit is also responsible for sending victims notification of an inmate's consideration, approval, or disapproval of any type of provisional release (e.g., work release, home detention, family leave, special leave).

#### Educating Victims

To further educate victims' about their rights and to encourage their participation, the DOC Victim Services Unit sponsors a variety of events and programs throughout the year. Each year to kick off the Department of Public Safety's *Victims' Rights Week*, the Unit sponsors a prison tour to allow victims and victim service providers the opportunity to see the inside workings of a prison. Another program offered by the Unit is the Victim/Offender Impact of Crime and Education Program (VOICE). Some of the services provided by VOICE include preparing victims who wish to witness an execution or assisting victims in establishing a safety plan. One of the more recent endeavors of the program is to expand the Victim Offender Dialogue Program, which has victims come and talk to their specific inmate. In addition to providing services to victims, VOICE also provides training for the DOC custody and case management staff.

The Victim Services Unit is dedicated to assisting crime victims and is always striving to provide a supportive environment where victims feel comfortable in voicing their concerns. Victims are welcome to attend our events and are encouraged to participate as panel members in our Victim Offender Impact of Crime and Education Program. Offenders

(Continued on page 3)

EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello Alumni!

*I hope everyone has fully recovered from the 2007 Academy ~ we know it was a physically and emotionally exhausting week, but we hope you thought it well worth it. I know all of the alumni really enjoyed spending time with you all during the Academy, I'm just sorry I missed seeing your graduation (but I think attending my own wedding is a pretty good excuse). Speaking of which, thank you all for the Bride-to-be gifts! That was incredibly sweet and thoughtful of you all. I'm just sorry I spoiled the surprise!*

*Well, I 'd like to give a big welcome to the newest members of the RVAAM Alumni community - the class of 2007! I look forward to seeing you all again on July 12th for the class debriefing. We are all anxious to hear your thoughts about your experiences at the Academy, and how you have been able to incorporate what you've learned into your current roles and duties. We also hope you have thought of ways to stay connected with RVAAM, particularly in how to become an active member of the Alumni Association - we would love for you to join us on any one of the various committees we have in operation to help support the Academy.*

*I want to thank everyone who volunteered your time and talents to this year's Academy! It was another great success! A special thank you to Dr. Deb Stanley, Dr. Heather Pfeifer, Elaine Witman, and Dave Thomas for continuing to work so hard on this endeavor each year - there would be no Academy without you. You're all the best!*

*I hope you all have a joyful and safe summer, and I look forward to catching up with you again at the debriefing!*

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!*

<http://cjj.mn-8.net/login.asp?loc=&link> - Criminal Justice Journalists provides a daily email with links to current news that addresses crime and victimization. This is an excellent resource to keep on top of current events and trends in the justice and victim assistance field. To subscribe, go to the website listed above and provide your email address in the upper-right hand corner.

<http://vroh.uakron.edu> -This website provides the "Oral History of the Crime Victim Assistance Field" and offers more than 60 hours of video clips that encompass the first-hand accounts of more than 50 of the field's pioneers. The project was developed by Justice Solutions in partnership with the University of Akron, with support from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, and the U.S. Department of Justice. There is full video, executive summary, and complete transcripts for each interview.

[http://www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/girls-and-drugs-overview.asp?id=banner](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/girls-and-drugs-overview.asp?id=banner) - Check out some new ideas on how to reach at-risk girls in your community.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/PreventingChildSexualAbuse.pdf> - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has just published a valuable new report entitled, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures" to assist youth organizations. The report identifies six key components of child abuse prevention, and describes goals and strategies for each.

News From the Field

When the victims' movement was founded over twenty years ago, the idea of legal rights for victims of crime was a distant ring of hope for those who suffered the trauma of victimization. Its early sound was a simple statement of seven principles, first articulated in 1980:

1) Victims and witnesses have a right to protection from intimidation and harm; 2) Victims and witnesses have a right to be informed concerning the criminal justice

process; 3) Victims and witnesses have a right to reparations; 4) Victims and witnesses have a right to preservation of property and employment; 5) Victims and witnesses have a right to due process in criminal court proceedings; 6) Victims and witnesses have a right to be treated with dignity and compassion; and 7) Victims and witnesses have a right to counsel.

Determined victims and their advocates continue to fight for victim rights. Since 1980, every state has sought to translate these principles into policies and practice. Thirty-two states have passed constitutional amendments that address one or more basic rights.

Keeping with these efforts, Maryland has adopted the following as its own set of constitutional amendments (as outlined in Article 47):



1) The right to respect -

*A victim of crime shall be treated by agents of the state with dignity, respect, and sensitivity during all phases of the criminal justice processes.*

2) The right to be informed -

*In a case originating by indictment or information filed in a circuit court, a victim of crime shall have the right to be informed of the rights established in this article and, upon request and if practicable, to be notified of a criminal justice proceeding.*

3) The right to be present -

*In a case originating by indictment or information filed in a circuit court, a victim of crime shall have the right to attend a criminal justice proceeding.*

4) The right to be heard -

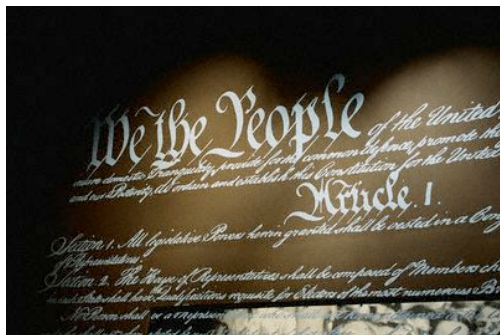
*In a case originating by indictment or information filed in a circuit court, a victim of crime shall have the right to be heard at a criminal justice proceeding.*

Despite the strides the victims rights movement has made over these past twenty-seven years, the campaign for "victim justice" is not yet completed. Principles of justice must be further defined, laws must be implemented and enforced, and rights must have remedies.

Critical legislation to protect the Crime Victims Fund!

As many of you have now heard, the Congressional Crime Victims' Rights Caucus

(continued on page 4)



## Just a thought...

(continued from page 1)

need to know the impact their crime has on others, and who best to tell them but actual victims.

If you would like additional information about the DOC Victim Programs, please feel free to contact me at the address below:

Division of Corrections Headquarters, Victim Services Unit, 6776 Reisterstown Road, Suite 310, Baltimore, MD 21215. Phone (410) 585-3331; (866) 606-7789.

**Deb Neighoff is the Director of the DOC's Victim Services Unit**

## Hot Topics

For all those who provide assistance to victims of crime, the safety of the victim is a number one priority. One particularly valuable program offered through the Office of the Secretary of State is the *Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program*. This program assists victims of domestic violence by offering them a way to keep their address confidential. Similar programs exist in 20 other states, 15 of which are also administered through the Office of the Secretary of the State.

The Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program originated from the 2006 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session, and went into effect on October 1, 2006. The goal of the program is to assist victims of domestic violence by providing an alternate address for them to use to help protect the confidentiality of their actual address. This alternate address can be used for interactions with any state and local government agency, such as school records, DHR (child support, food stamps, etc.), law enforcement, DMV (driver's license, vehicle registration, voter registration), and ongoing court proceedings. It can also be used by participants for personal mail so that all correspondence is automatically forwarded to the victim.

There is no cost for victims to participate in the program, however victims must meet certain eligibility criteria. The program requires that the applicant must be a victim of domestic violence who fears for his/her safety, or is the parent/guardian of a domestic violence victim who is a minor or who is incapacitated. Persons who are attempting to escape from actual or threatened domestic violence can also apply regardless of whether or not these acts have been reported to law enforcement. Victims who are interested in applying may do so directly with the program, however, the program recommends applying through a domestic violence service provider as part of their overall safety plan.

(continued on page 4)

## 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...*

**Karen Crawley-Buckholtz (2005)** - Karen was recently promoted to coordinate victim services for Area 5 in the Department of Juvenile Services. As such, Karen has been reassigned to the Annapolis Office and now supervises court staff, investigations, intake, night intake, and Neighborhood Youth Panels. If that isn't enough to keep her busy, Karen is also the proud grandmother of a new grandson! Congratulations Karen ~ keep up the good work!

**Debbie (Creswell) Bradley (2005)** - Debbie, our very own Alumni Vice-President, surprised the RVAAM faculty with the announcement that she and her fiancé, Tom were going to speed up their wedding plans and get married during this year's Academy! The two were married on June 7. Congratulations to the both of them!!

**Maria Gonzalez-Ruiz (2006)** - Be sure to congratulate Maria the next time you run into her - at the Governor's Victim Assistant Awards luncheon this past May, Maria was honored with a Governor's citation for all her hard work reaching out to the Spanish-speaking victim population. Way to go Maria!

**Jennifer (Weber) Goode (2005)** - Jen and her husband are proud to announce the impending birth of their first son this upcoming September. Congratulations Jen - we can't wait to meet him!

**Kim Holmes (2006)** - Kim recently had an article published in the Baltimore Sun about a project she started for survivors. The article, published on May 1st, was entitled "Favorite recipes, fond memories." Keep up the good work Kim!

(continued on page 4)

## Hot Topics

(Cont. from page 3)

The program is currently seeking domestic violence professionals around the State to become trained Application Assistants. Program staff will provide comprehensive training to those who are interested. For more information about the program, or how to become a trained Applicant Assistant, please contact Carol L. Cicconi, Address Confidentiality Program Manager at (410) 260-3875 or by email at [cicconi@sos.state.md.us](mailto:cicconi@sos.state.md.us)

## Alumni Updates

(Cont. from page 3)

**Rev. Wayne Price (2005)** - Rev Price was recently inducted as a new member of Metropolitan's Who's Who, 2007-2008, for his "dedication, leadership and excellence in all aspects of Religion, and is being recognized for his outstanding contributions to this field." Congratulations Rev. Price - you continue to inspire us all!

On June 27th, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) presented a Web Forum discussion with two of our very own - **Rev. Theresa Mercer (2005)** and **Elaine Witman** - on best practices for collaborating on faith-based initiatives. In addition to their individual experience, Rev. Mercer and Ms. Witman co-directed the Baltimore chapter of the OVC-funded Spirituality and Victim Services Initiative from 2003 - 2006. Congratulations you two! Keep up the good work!!

## Save the Date

**Summer is fast upon us - as busy as our lives get during these few months trying to balance the demands of work and family, here are a couple important events coming up:**

### 2007 RVAAM Academy Debriefing

July 12th, 2007; 11:30-2:00pm

Hosted at the University of Baltimore

### 33rd Annual NOVA Conference

July 22nd - 27th, 2007; Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV

For more information, contact NOVA at [www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org)

### 2nd Annual RVAAM Alumni Association Family Picnic

Saturday, September 8th (Time/location TBA).

### RVAAM Advanced Training on Child Victimization

Thursday, September 20th; 9:00am - 3:00pm, University of Baltimore

More information forthcoming!!

## News From the Field

(Cont. from page 2)

has drafted a bill that seeks to protect the Crime Victims Fund by taking it 'off-budget.' The legislation is similar to the Social Security 'lock-box' in that it would remove the Fund from the President's budget and require a "super" majority for Congress to use the Fund for purposes not authorized by the statute. This would protect the integrity of the Fund, and prevent what has become an annual attempt to divert VOCA monies for purposes totally unrelated to crime victim assistance.

Caucus co-chairs, Jim Costa and Ted Poe, introduced the bill in late June, along with 15 co-sponsors. We will be tracking the progress of this legislation and will hopefully report positive news in the next edition of the Academy Forum!

## Highlights of 2007 Academy

Well, we had another successful Academy this past June and got to know 32 wonderful individuals who came from all over the state of Maryland and brought with them a diverse background of knowledge and expertise.

Despite a rocky start that first evening during check-in (the air conditioning went down, causing the ice-cream social to turn into ice-cream mush and requiring us to move to another dorm), the participants were eager to dive right in. It was evident from very early on that the group shared a great sense of camaraderie with one another, and passion for what they do in the field. Their desire to learn was evident throughout the week. And learn they did! The group heard from experts in the field on a wide range of topics, including:

homicide, post-conviction and sentencing, sexual assault, domestic violence, spiritual trauma, child victimization, human trafficking, vicarious traumatization, and collaboration - just to name a few! However, it wasn't "all work and no play." In the evenings, the participants enjoyed getting to know one another on a more personal level and sharing with one another their work experiences and information, while they sat in the lounge and snacked on goodies provided by the alumni. "Dorm mothers," Dr. Pfeifer and Valda Rotollo, also helped lighten the mood by organizing a game-night towards the end of the week where the ladies squared off against one another in a fierce match of Family Feud.

This year, we were also able to offer advanced training for the alumni that ran concurrently with the Academy. Lisa Ferentz, LCSW-C, DAPA, a psychotherapist who has worked with adolescents, adults, couples, and families for nearly twenty-three years, and is the founder of a certificate program in Advanced Trauma Treatment through the University of Maryland School of Social Work, led two day-long seminars that focused on the mental health needs of trauma survivors and how to minimize one's risk of vicarious traumatization. During the first seminar, the participants discussed the complexities of treating trauma survivors and learned some different strategies they could employ in their own work to better assist their clients. During the second part of the advanced training, the participants were grouped together to make a collage as an exercise to address their own issues of vicarious traumatization. While working on the project, the only sound in the room was the turning of pages and cutting of scissors. Everyone fully dedicated themselves to the project and gained a great deal of insight from the experience. Every participant noted how valuable their time with Lisa was.

The week's events culminated with a wonderful graduation luncheon and ceremony, where the participants were able to reunite with their families and friends. After listening to a powerful keynote address on courage offered by Father Ray Chase, one of our favorite trainers, family and friends and faculty watched each participant receive their well-earned certificate for successfully completing the 40 hour curriculum. The ceremony included lots of laughter, and quite a few tears as emotions ran high and everyone realized the week was coming to a close. Despite the sacrifices that were made to attend the Academy, the participants realized the knowledge, the experience, and the friendships they gained during those five days made everything they endured worth it. Well done Class of 2007!

# 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 Cynthia Obermaier, a recent graduate of the 2007 Academy*

**My childhood nickname was...**

Twinkle Toes

**The last book I read was...**

My forensic nursing textbook

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

German

**My motto or favorite saying is ...**

Take it Easy! (I have to keep reminding myself!!)

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

Getting my R.N. while working full-time and raising six kids

**My fondest memory ...**

Spending one-on-one time with my dad when I was a kid

**I appreciate...**

My children

**My favorite time of day is...**

Evening

**My favorite food is ...**

Ice-cream

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

Paris - it's an incredible city!

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

King Henry VIII, Amelia Earhardt & Mariska Hargitay

**My favorite movie...**

Wizard of Oz

**The biggest challenge for me is ...**

Focus on one thing - there is so much I want to do!

**I can't stand...**

Mean people

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

Author

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

Secretary or Administrative Assistant - I can't sit still that long!

**The three words that best describe my life are ...**

Hectic, full, eventful

**My inspiration is...**

The knowledge that one person can make a difference in this world

**My wildest dream...**

To get married for the 3rd time - I don't believe there is a man who could get me to do that!

**One of my goals for 2007 is...**

Move my residence closer to my daughter and my first granddaughter (she's due in September)

## Occupational Outlook



The Washington County, Oregon District Attorney's Office is currently seeking a Victim Assistance Director. This is a wonderful, victim-centered office in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. If you are interested, you can find additional information posted on the web at [www.co.washington.or.us](http://www.co.washington.or.us)

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)

## Editorial Board

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

## 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.

**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in October 2007**