



Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #47- May 2018

Just a Thought

Thinking about attending the Roper Academy? Get some insight on the whole experience and what you have to gain from a few alums who went to the Academy.

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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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Certification News

Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section explains each level of certification, and what are the specific requirements for each.

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It's important to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. This section highlights what recently passed, or is currently under consideration.

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Best Practices

What makes the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland a 'best practice' and a nationally recognized model by OVC? Read Keith Gethers essay on what it has accomplished over the past fifteen years.

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Just a thought...

The Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Week of Learning and Building Connections

Another year, and another Roper Victim Assistance Academy (RVAAM) is upon us. I graduated from RVAAM in 2016, and I can honestly say that my participation at the Academy has been one of the highlights of my career as a Victim Service Provider with the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center. Before coming to the Academy, I had a vague idea of what victim services looked like across Maryland. But one of the most valuable lessons I learned during my time at the Academy is the importance of building professional connections to help with problem solving when working with victims of crime. Not only did I learn a great deal from all of the trainers who facilitated the various workshops throughout the

week, but I made so many professional connections with my peers. We talked and shared ideas about how we could improve victim services across the state, and provided emotional support to one another as we wrestled with difficult topics. That actually was one of favorite parts of the Academy - being around so many people who care. I left the Academy at the end of the week feeling energized and ready to use what I learned to make a difference in my community. In particular, I walked away with a set of contacts in various agencies in my county, as well as across the state, that I could reach out to whenever I need additional information for a client.

I recently reached out to one of my peers from the Academy, Tara Smith, to find out what she took away from the Academy. Tara works as a Victim Coordinator for the Baltimore City Department of Juvenile Services. In this capacity, she assists victims and survivors of juvenile crime referring them to community resources



and keeping them informed of all relevant court hearings. Tara noted that she has since incorporated the knowledge and skills she learned at the Academy in her day-to-day duties, specifically, she shared, "I apply the skills I learned from Roper by remaining mindful, self-aware, and motivated towards growth, change, empowerment, respect, and compassion for myself and others. In particular, I focus on practicing empathy in my work. By practicing empathy, I have the ability to understand and respect my client's experiences and needs. Therefore I can provide resources and assistance to help break down the barriers that my clients face daily." In sum, Tara, noted "The Academy, as a whole, was a great learning experience to grow professionally, personally, and spiritually. I was especially interested in the trauma training because as victim advocacy is evolving, we need to understand how trauma is the root to all victimization." Finally, Tara offered the following advice to the next cohort,

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello Alums!

This is such an exciting time of year as we prepare for the next RVAAM Academy class! Be sure that you take some time to visit the Academy from June 4th-8th, and take advantage of the advanced training that is scheduled on Thursday. If you can't make it during the week, be sure to join us on Friday, June 8th for graduation. We will be graduating the 15th class of the Academy - what an accomplishment! You'll definitely want to be there to welcome them into the RVAAM family.

VSPN is looking at some activities to get us all together throughout this year, so be sure to watch your email inbox for further information from Naomi!

Finally, if you haven't already done so, now is the time to get certified. Lots of Alum have taken this step, and there is growing interest in the field to expand certification to help further professionalize the field. For example, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office now requires all new hires to be certified within one year of hire. I would be willing to bet more agencies are going to follow suit because why wouldn't we want the most qualified people to assist victims and survivors? So, if you are want to learn more about certification requirements and process, go to www.rvaam.us

Enjoy the start of the summer season - until next time~

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't.
~ **Rikki Rogers**

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!



Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland

The Academy offers a rare opportunity to live, work, study, and interact with victim service providers from all areas of advocacy from all over the state. While it is assumed that participants will have had previous training in their area of specialization, the Academy provides a fundamental overview of the entire field of advocacy, including: victimology, victim rights, and victim assistance for residents in Maryland. Sessions are led by recognized leaders and practitioners in the field of victimology, criminal justice, and victim rights, and focuses on skill building and best practices. For more information about the Academy, go to: <http://rvaam.us>

Victim Services Professional Network

The alumni organization of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy, VSPN advocates for the professionalization of the field of victim services. In addition to supporting and collaboration with RVAAM, VSPN strives to foster opportunities for its members to network with their fellow victim service professionals from various specializations across the state of Maryland through both professional and social events hosted throughout the year.

Check out their Facebook page at VSPN Roper or subscribe to their Twitter account @VSPN 2011

Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center

The Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to serving the interests of crime victims in Maryland. Its services include criminal justice education, court accompaniment, counseling and support groups, legal information and assistance, policy advocacy, and technical assistance. To learn more, go to: <http://www.md-crimevictims.org>

Maryland Community Services Locator (MDCSL)

The MDCSL is a tool that individuals can use to connect to over 9,000 health, social service, and criminal justice resource programs in Maryland. The database provides service information, maps, and driving directions. To access the database, go to: <https://211md.org>

SAVE THE DATE!

**2018
RVAAM
Academy**

**June 4th-8th,
2018, Bon
Secours Spir-
itual Retreat Center, Mar-
riottsville, MD**



The 15th annual RVAAM Academy is scheduled for the first week of June at the beautiful and peaceful Bon Secours. To register, go to www.rvaam.us and download an application.



National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) 44th Annual Conference

August 20th-23rd, 2018, Jacksonville, FL

Join over 1,700 victim assistance professionals from around the world at this premiere training event to learn from dynamic subject matter experts in victim assistance and crisis response. Attendees can choose from over 110 workshops on emerging trends and best practices. To learn more about this event, go to: www.trynova.org

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 alums have experienced since we last met...



- **Stacia Dashiell, M.S., VASIII (Class of 2014)** - Stacia was recently promoted to the Managing Director of the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. Way to go Stacia, we are so proud of you!
- **Deirdre Gardner, LCSW-C, VASI-II (Class of 2006)** - It is with both

sadness and happiness that Deirdre announced her retirement from Roberta's House the end of March. She is of course sad to be leaving a position and organization she loves, but happy for the new opportunity that the Lord has sent her way to work with vulnerable adults. We wish you all the best in your new endeavors Deirdre, we know you will be a tremendous asset in your new role!

- **Autumn (Linderborn) Nash (Class of 2010)** - Autumn recently got hired as an adjunct professor in the Department of Criminology at Notre Dame of Maryland University this spring semester. And she and her husband are expecting their second child this September. Congratulations Autumn on each of these wonderful milestones - we are so excited for you!
- **Robin Stroizer (Class of 2015)** - Robin was just promoted to Administrative Assistant of the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center Building Management Office with Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. What an awesome promotion Robin - congratulations! We are so proud of you!

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.us 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 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 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 Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete oral presentation; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials are available online at www.rvaam.us (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming classes on ethics. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org or by phone at (410) 638-4905.



CONGRATULATIONS! Check out the newest certified Victim Assistance Specialists for the State of Maryland:

Level I Victim Assistance Specialist

Wendy Hernandez

Just a Thought (Cont.)

"Be prepared to enjoy a process of healing, a level of peace, and possible breakthrough in a short amount of time." I echo Tara's sentiments - it is a wonderful introduction to the victim services landscape across our State, and you will meet so many new people with varied interests and backgrounds who all have a strong desire to help victims of crime. So go with an inquisitive mind and an open heart, and I promise, you won't be disappointed.

Essay contributed by Claudia Ahwireng, VASI, Class of 2016.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or policies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!

Here's a look back at a few key pieces of legislation that the Maryland Legislature proposed and approved in 2017, and what is in the works for 2018:

SB0963/HB0247 - Criminal Procedure - Victims Service Unit - Victim Compensation - Establishing a Victim Services Unit in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention; transferring existing functions and operations of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the sexual assault forensic examinations program to the Unit; requiring the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to maintain an office in Baltimore City to accept and provide assistance in processing claims; requiring the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Preven-

tion to report on matters related to crime victims by December 31, 2020. The next hearing for this bill is March 23, 2018.

SB0578/HB0633 - Secretary of State - Address Confidentiality Program - Shielding of Real Property Records - Enabling private entities to accept the use of a certain substitute address by a victim of domestic abuse who is a participant in an address confidentiality program; requiring any person to accept a certain address of a participant in an address confidentiality program as the address of the participant; prohibiting a person from knowingly and intentionally seeking and obtaining the actual address or telephone number of a participant in an address confidentiality program; requiring the Secretary of State to adopt regulations. The last



hearing date was March 14, 2018.

HB1124 - Criminal Procedure - Statewide Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Tracking System - Recommendations - Requiring the Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee to develop recommendations regarding the creation and operation of a statewide sexual assault evidence collection kit tracking system that is accessible to victims of sexual assault and law enforcement; and requiring the Committee to submit an application for a grant for funding to support the implementation of the Committee's recommendations to the federal government, including the Department of Justice by January 1, 2019.

The next hearing date for this bill is March 27, 2018 in the Senate.

FYI! The Victim Information & Notification Everyday (VINE) and VINE Protective Order programs has been transferred from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention to the Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services - For inquiries regarding either program, or to request brochures, please contact Stanley Lofton at DPSCS.

Best Practices

Modeling the Model - RVAAM/VSPN

Since the early 2000s, there has been increasing interest in forming state victim assistance academies. As of today, there are 37 active state academies. The remaining states either do not have an academy, or are trying to reactivate one. The Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland (RVAAM) is a sterling example for victim assistance academies in the United States. Like many other academies, it is a concentrated interactive course designed to expose students to both theory and best practices.

Rarely will you find victim service professionals and victim advocates referring to crime statistics published by state or federal agencies. Instead, they are consistently busy attempting to find ways to keep pace with the needs for services - regardless of whether the annual crime statistics indicate an upward or downward trend. To prepare students for the harsh realities related to the challenges of serving victims, RVAAM provides intensive, standardized training during its annual Academy, as well as post-academy professional development.

Since 2004, the faculty and staff of RVAAM have strategically instituted progressive plans to equip victim service professionals and victim advocates with a unique blend of information and connections to a diverse range of resources. There are five noteworthy features that sets RVAAM apart - first is its diverse population of participants. Its 500 plus alumni have come from every county in Maryland, as well as from neighboring states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Washington, DC, Tennessee, and Texas. Second, the Academy's forward thinking approach to subject-matter content keeps it relevant to the emerging needs of the field. For example, some of the recent topics covered at the Academy include human trafficking, cyber-victimization, forensic interviewing, trauma-informed services, etc. Third, RVAAM has attained a level of sustainability that is unprecedented in the field, securing a line-item in the state's annual budget. Fourth, RVAAM recently developed the Maryland Victim Assistance Certification Program (MVSCP) to help further professionalize the field of victim services. The program offers three levels of certification that reflect a candidate's varying years of experience in the field and level of professional training. Finally, RVAAM is the only state victim assistance academy with an alumni association, the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN). Like other similarly situated organizations, VSPN provides alumni with a multitude of professional and social opportunities to network with colleagues and to take an active role in supporting the Academy. Specifically, the association supports its members by sponsoring training opportunities throughout the year, certifications, industry updates, career enhancement opportunities, continuing education units, professional mentoring, and countless volunteer opportunities.

As a result of reaching the aforementioned milestones and the collaborative partnership it has built with its

alumni association, RVAAM was recognized by the Office of Victims of Crime as the "gold standard" for other state victim assistance academies to emulate.

As RVAAM welcomes its 15th class, we should take a moment to reflect on what it has been able accomplish over the past decade. There is no doubt it has proven itself to be an invaluable training experience for hundreds of victim service professionals, and as such, has helped to improve the quality of victim services in the state of Maryland. But there is still yet more work that needs to be done - it is my hope that we, the alums of RVAAM, will continue to look for opportunities on how we might be able to further professionalize the field of victim services. It is through our active participation with VSPN that we can help RVAAM achieve a new set of milestones and further strengthen the competency of victim service professionals and victim advocates throughout the state.

Essay contributed by Keith Gethers

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 have for a future topic to Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harford-sheriff.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!

NEW RVAAM WEBSITE!!

If you have not yet seen RVAAM's new website, be sure to take a moment and do so! If we don't say so ourselves, we think it's top notch! Check it out at: www.rvaam.us

Alumni Directory

The 2017 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 or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in October 2018



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