

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #21 - January 2011

Just a Thought

Gang violence has become an increasing problem in many communities, and ordinary citizens are sometimes caught in the cross-fire. Learn more about the unique needs victims of gang violence have in terms of security and emotional healing.

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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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Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy this summer and fall!

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Always find yourself thinking, "I wonder what happened to..." Check out what your fellow Alumni are up to!



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Just a thought...

Life After Gangs

Kevin Wilson

According to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment report, approximately 1 million gang members belonging to more than 20,000 gangs were criminally active within all 50 states and the District of Columbia last year. According to the 2009 Department of Legislative Services report on Criminal Gangs in Maryland, the Maryland State Police reported the presence of gangs in 22 of Maryland's counties (all but Somerset and Worcester), with the most predominant of the gangs to include the Bloods, the Crips, and the MS-13s. Dealing with gang violence is a traumatic experience for every one involved. For those who fall victim of gang violence, life will never be the same.

Gang victims, unlike other victims, face a host of additional stressors related

to the incident especially if they themselves were part of a gang.

Typically gangs attack in packs, similar to piranhas or wolves. They are relentless in their infliction of harm on whomever they choose to target. Most typically gangs target other individuals involved in the gang lifestyle, whether it is a rival member from another crew or even one of their own for violating some implicit 'code' of behavior for their gang. Sadly many of these victims are very young and are not emotionally or psychologically mature enough to handle this type of trauma, and consequently may react by lashing out at those who inflicted the harm thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence seen all too often in gangs.

Things can be even more dangerous for those youth who are trying to extricate themselves from the gang lifestyle. Unlike a group of peers that you can simply distance yourself from when your interests no longer align, youth who are involved in a gang face serious danger when they attempt to leave their crew. In many

cases, such actions have resulted in the youth being seriously injured and even killed because their fellow members fear the youth will 'snitch' to authorities about what activities the crew has been involved in. Unfortunately this threat is not

exclusive to just the one youth, some of these youths' families have also been targeted in order to intimidate them into silence. Thus communities with a high gang population, such as Baltimore City, have been working on strategies to assist youth in extricating themselves from gangs while ensuring their protection, as well as that of their family.

Yet not all victims of gang violence involve those who have direct ties to the gang culture. Sadly, sometimes ordinary citizens fall victim to gang violence. In some instances gangs will purposely target a citizen, sometimes to extort money, sometimes to 'punish' them for some perceived insult, or sometimes to simply exhibit their power over others. In other instances, citizens are inadvertently

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings Alumni!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and enjoyed some time with friends and family. Now that it is the beginning of another new year and everyone is making their New Year resolutions I just wanted to make a few suggestions. I would love for everyone to commit to becoming active in the Victim Services Professional Network (previously referred to as the RVAAM Alumni Association). There are so many exciting things coming up that you won't want to miss them! The first one is the yearly general meeting (date/location TBA) where you can find out everything that has been going on with our Network, as well as other events around the state. There will also be the FREE advanced training this February that you won't want to miss. Be sure to check the RVAAM website for more information on both of these events (<http://www.rvaam.org>). You'll also receive an email as soon as all of the details are finalized.

Another event you are going to want to mark on your calendar is this year's Academy, which will be held on May 16-20th at the Bon Secours Spiritual Center in Marriottsville, Maryland. This is a beautiful facility and this year's participants will be happy to hear that they will have their own room and private bath! So please help recruit someone from your agency and/or community to attend, and don't forget to tell them they can apply for TTAC funds through OVC to cover the cost. As in past years, there will be the opportunity for alums to attend advanced training during this week as well. So please contact Linda Fair or William "Archie" Griffin to find out how you can get involved in the planning for this year's Academy!

On a final note, we have some wonderful news to share!! I know that many of you have been asking about becoming certified professionals in the field of victim services. Well this year you'll finally have that opportunity!! That's right, the Maryland Certification Program will be up and running this year! Keep watching the newsletter and the website for further information.

Wishing you all the best in 2011!

Debbie Bradley, C.A., Editor

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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!

National Gang Crime Research Center - The National Gang Crime Research Center provides background information on the nature and scope of gang activities in the United States and materials to help educate communities about different prevention programs. The NGCRC also offers trainings throughout the nation to assist communities in developing their own gang prevention and intervention strategies. To learn more, go to www.ngcrc.com

National Gang Center - The National Gang Center provides access to the latest research on gangs and evidence-based prevention/intervention programs available. The NGC provides links to tools, databases, and other resources to assist communities in developing effective community-based prevention and intervention strategies. For more information, go to www.nationalgangcenter.org

G.R.E.A.T. Gang Resistance Education and Training - The G.R.E.A.T. program is a school-based gang prevention program taught by local law enforcement officers. The program draws on community partnerships with other national youth organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the National Police Athletic Leagues, to encourage better relationships among the community, parents, schools, and local law enforcement agencies. For more information, go to www.great-online.org

Project Safe Neighborhoods - Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN) is a nationwide commitment to reduce gun and gang crime in America by networking with local programs that target gun crime and providing those programs with additional tools and resources to be successful. Through the program's funding initiatives it has been able to assist local communities in hiring new federal and state prosecutors, support law enforcement through training, distribute gun lock safety kits, develop and promote community outreach efforts at reducing gun and gang violence, and hosting a variety of webinars. To learn more, go to www.psn.gov/about/

Office of Justice Programs and Delinquency Prevention - OJJDP is part of the Office of Justice Programs and the U.S. Department of Justice. The mission of this agency is to support states, local communities, and tribal jurisdictions in developing and implementing effective programs for at-risk juveniles. Be sure to check out OJJDP's site at www.ojjdp.org to learn more about gangs, risk factors associated with gang membership, and what communities can do to establish prevention and intervention programs in their jurisdictions.



Save the Date

FREE Two Day Advanced Training sponsored by the Roper Victim Assistance Academy -

Day One: "Reframing the Other: Embracing Diversity in Ourselves and Others" led by Sabrina N'Diaye, LCSW-C

Day Two: "Advanced Expressive Therapy Tools & Techniques to Work with Self and Others in Non-Clinical Settings" led by Yehuda Bergman, Ph.D.

*February 10th & February 11th (Times TBA)
University of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD*

Please join us for a FREE two-day training at the University of Baltimore that will focus on learning how to better serve a culturally diverse population and how to incorporate innovative strategies for self-care in one's daily life as well as to share with victims of crime. The trainers, Ms. Sabrina N'Diaye and Dr. Yehuda Bergman, serve as faculty for Lisa Ferentz's Institute for Professional Development.

More information will be posted on the Academy website (<http://www.rvaam.org>) on how to register for these two special events as well as the special social activity RVAAM will be sponsoring for attendees Thursday evening after the first day of training concludes ... in the meantime, mark your calendars!

2011 RVAAM Academy

May 16 - May 20, 2011 at Bon Secours Spiritual Center, Marriottsville, Maryland

This year's Academy will be hosted at the beautiful and peaceful retreat operated by Bon Secours. Recruitment for this year's class is currently underway, so if you know anyone who would benefit from this training, please be sure to share this information with them and go to the Academy's website (<http://www.rvaam.org>) to download a copy of this year's application. Advanced training opportunities will be provided for Alumni once again during the week of the Academy. Be sure to check back on the Academy website for information in the next few months.

If you have any further questions, please email Dr. Debra Stanley at dstanley@ubalt.edu.

Lauren Brown (Class of 2010) - Lauren just completed her first half-marathon in Las Vegas. Way to go Lauren, keep on running!

Diane Champe (Class of 2010) - Diane is now on the Steering Committee for SAMHSA's National Trauma Campaign which will be rolled out in 2011! The goal of this campaign is to promote mental health well-being and healthy relationships with individuals with mental health problems who are trauma survivors and their families, by raising awareness of the connection between trauma and mental health. Diane will also be a presenter in Orlando this February at the first annual "Healing Together Conference," an educational and support conference on Dissociative Identify Disorder. Way to go Diane - we are so proud of how well you are representing Maryland and the needs of crime victims!



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...

Look at Our Movers & Shakers!

Dianna Abramowski (Class of 2007) - Diana graduated with her Masters Degree from the University of Baltimore this January, and will be starting law school at the University of Baltimore this spring. Congratulations Dianna, what an accomplishment!

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:

U.S. Attorney & GOCCP Announce Grants to Fight Guns and Gangs

On Friday, November 12th, 2010, Maryland U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein and the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention made a joint announcement listing seven Maryland agencies to receive funds through the U.S. Justice Department's Project Safe Neighborhoods program. The Project



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Safe Neighborhoods Program (PSN) is funded by the federal government and is administered in Maryland by GOCCP. The funds are meant to develop, implement, and support anti-gang and gun prevention and enforcement strategies. The local programs should emphasize one of five core strategies: partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability.

New Domestic Violence Program Being Piloted in Prince George’s County



In October, Governor Martin O’Malley signed an Executive Order establishing the Maryland Domestic Violence Health Care Screening and Response Initiative, which encourages the development statewide of hospital based and health care based domestic violence screening programs. In response to the Executive Order, the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention and the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission have made state monies available, while Carefirst BlueCross BlueShield, the Amerigroup Foundation, and Prince George’s Hospital Center have committed private/ non-profit funds to pilot a domestic violence program at Prince George’s Hospital Center. The program’s primary goals are to identify victims at an early stage in the cycle of domestic violence and extend comprehensive services to prevent future physical and emotional injury.

Maryland Crime Victims’ Resource Center, Inc. Announces Launch of National Identity Theft Victims Network Project

The Maryland Crime Victims’ Resource Center, Inc. (MCVRC) is pleased to announce the launch of a National Identity Theft Victims’ Network cooperative agreement with the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to facilitate up to nine sub-awards of up to \$50,000 each to create or support regional or statewide coalitions to assist victims of identity theft.

The sub-recipient coalitions will assist victims of identity theft by encouraging the expansion of existing victim service programs to improve the responses to victims of identity theft. The project’s overarching goal is to expand the outreach and capacity of victim service programs to better address the rights and needs of victims of identity theft.

As a legal service provider with expertise in both victims’ rights and identity theft, and as a cooperative partner in several prior OVC pass-through agreements, MCVRC’s leadership will help to build and create an infrastructure, training materials, outreach tools and direct victim assistance services to better serve the under-served population of identity theft victims. MCVRC will provide support and guidance to the sub-recipient coalitions, working to create or improve their current service delivery portfolio at the local, state, and regional level to better address the needs of and assistance to identity theft victims.

The Request for Proposals and sub-award application instructions will be made available and announced on MCVRC’s website at www.mdcrimevictims.org in Spring 2011. Additionally, MCVRC is seeking a Project Director for the National Identity Theft Network collaborative project. The Project Director is part of the Identity Theft Network Team at MCVRC, located in Upper Marlboro, MD and will have overall responsibility for the success of the sub-recipient sites in meeting their project goals. For more information about the position or the application process, please review the MCVRC’s website.

Best Practices

Community Conferencing Center: Using Communication to Reduce Youth Involved Violence

The Community Conferencing Center (CCC) is a community justice organization providing an opportunity for people to safely and effectively prevent and resolve conflicts and crime through facilitated communication. CCC was created in 1995 by Dr. Lauren Abramson. She introduced community conferencing in Baltimore with a vision that communities and individuals will recognize that they can safely and effectively resolve conflicts themselves - when provided with an appropriate structure to do so.



CCC uses a “restorative circle” method that creates a safe space for those involved in violence, and those affected by it, to communicate with one another in efforts to reach more effective ways of dealing with conflict than resorting to more violence.

CCC’s Outreach Coordinator, David Williams, explained that CCC does not offer gang intervention specifically because gangs are part of a culture that does not necessarily lend itself to the restorative process. Violence committed by individuals in gangs comes from a source that originates with the identify of the gang. An example would be Blood vs. Crip - red vs. blue - where a simple color can incite violence because it is associated with a rival gang’s particular identity. Instead Mr. Williams notes, “We deal with incidents of conflict peripherally - such as fights at schools where there may

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or may not have been arrests made, then we use community conferencing as a way for those involved in that conflict to reach some type of resolution.”

But CCC’s work will touch the lives of those in contact with gang violence. If a person happened to be in a gang, or is thinking about making that transition, community conferencing could be the key to educating them about the turmoil violence has on people’s families and communities. A recent Maryland juvenile justice study showed that young offenders who participate in a community conference are 60 percent less likely to re-offend.



CCC’s impact is significant. Residents are empowered to resolve their own conflicts, victims have a voice in deciding outcomes, and citi-

zens are directly engaged in public safety issues and are mobilized to find ways to build their communities based on relationships and accountability. Statistically this type of restorative justice is supported by the fact that 98 percent of the community conferences in Baltimore have resulted in a written agreement created by all participants, with over 95 percent compliance with the terms of those agreements. Over 7,000 Baltimore residents successfully resolved their own crimes and conflicts through this method!

As the only multi-sector program being conducted in a large American inner-city, CCC offers services for schools, law enforcement, the workplace, neighborhoods, those returning from prison, and those returning from the military, and also provides other opportunities for training, technical assistance, program development and program evaluation services. CCC operates under the philosophy that conflicts present opportunities for learning, healing, and transformation. People will generate creative and lasting solutions to their own conflicts

when everyone effected by a conflict is given a safe forum to tell his or her story and be a part of the solution.

“Those involved in community conferencing can be held accountable directly. They begin to understand how someone can be hurt and affected by their actions,” Mr. Williams notes. “This type of dialogue and bringing all those persons effected to the table allows for a greater space of resolution where hearts can be touched and attitudes can change. Any time you have a young person hold themselves responsible for how they have effected someone else’s life you build a bridge that is now human to human, instead of Crip to Blood, or my identity against your identity. There is a realization - you hurt like I hurt, so let’s do something different to make things better. This increases the social capital in communities.”

For more information on Baltimore’s Community Conferencing Center, check out their website at <http://www.communityconferencing.org>

** Essay contributed by Bridgette Harwood*

Just a Thought (Cont.)

caught in the crossfire when gang members target other individuals from a rival gang. Regardless of the circumstance, being a victim of a gang crime can produce long lasting scars. Given the volatile and often vicious nature of these groups, victims of gang violence often struggle with a persistent sense of fear that the gang will target them or their families in attempt to silence them. Thus it is not uncommon for victims of gangs, or even other citizens who witness such attacks, to be reluctant in reporting these crimes to authorities and/or to cooperate with law enforcement in any investigation.

States have adopted a number of strategies to offset the impact of gang-related witness intimidation, such as intensive witness management, aggressive prosecu-

tion of intimidators, setting of high bail in cases involving gang violence, the creation and use of witness assistance programs, and in even some instances, relocating those that are being threatened. In 2005, the Maryland legislature toughened its law to prevent the intimidation of victims and witnesses, and the punishment for those who act in such a manner (see MD Annotated Code, Section 10-901 and Criminal Law Section 9-301, 9-302, 9-303, and 9-305).

There are multiple resources on the web that can help victim service providers learn more about the nature of gang crime in the United States and in Maryland, as well as learn about the complexities of witness intimidation and what different jurisdictions are attempting to assist victims of gang violence. To learn more about gangs in general, and their prevalence within Maryland, you can download copies of the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment (<http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs32/32146/index.htm>) and the Department of Legislative Services’ 2009 report on Criminal Gangs in Maryland (<http://dls.states.md.us>), and to learn more about gang-related witness intimidation, and methods to prevent it, download both the 2007 National Gang Center Bulletin (www.nationalgangcenter.gov) and the National Institute of Justice’s report on Preventing Gang- and Drug-Related Witness Intimidation



(www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/163067.pdf)

Kevin Wilson is a Baltimore City Assistant State’s Attorney.

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 Bob Ertter, a graduate of the 2005 Academy

The last movie I saw in the theaters was ... "For Colored Girls" - I'd recommend it for the strong acting and good story line.

My childhood nickname was ... Critter

If I could go anywhere in the world for vacation it would have to be ...
Yellow Stone National Park

My favorite professional sports team is ... the Kansas City Chiefs

My two most favorite colors are ... red and grey

The animal I think best represents my personality is ...
an Otter, for its playfulness

The best piece of advice I've ever been given was ...
Smile!

My favorite thing to do to help unwind after a long day is ... work out at the gym

The one technological device I would hate to have lost and/or broken is ...

cell phone, cell phone, cell phone!

My favorite season of the year is ... summer

The thing I like best about my job is; and the most challenging thing is ... the independence ... and meeting deadlines

The occupation, other than the one I'm in now, I would most like to have is ... National Park Ranger

The occupation I am SO happy I don't have is ... a mortician

The quality I like or appreciate most in others is ...
friendliness

The quality I like least in others is ... mean spiritedness

The last thing I did to treat myself was ... bought U2 tickets!

When I was a child, I wanted to be ... a farmer or a Park Ranger

The three adjectives that best describe my personality

are ... friendly, playful, and caring.

My favorite sound is ...
ocean waves breaking on the beach

One of my goals for 2011 is ... to relax and not take things so seriously

Volunteers Needed!

The E. Diane Champe Institute (EDCI) is seeking a number of Board members to serve a one year term, with eligibility for renewal each year thereafter. The members of the Board meet monthly to review and discuss building a Center for adult survivors of child abuse and neglect in Montgomery County, MD. The time requirement is approximately 5 hours per month for meetings and preparation. Ideal candidates will live within the Towson-Sykesville-Rockville area, and has either program/grant development or finance background. Interested parties can email Diane Champe at edchampe@gmail.com

Alumni Directory

The 2010 Alumni Directory, which includes the addition of the most recent Academy class members, will soon be 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) 836-5490.

Editorial Board

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Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2011