

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #19 - July 2010

Just a Thought

Sometimes we forget just how difficult the experience is for the families of homicide victims. One set of parents relay their experience and share how invaluable victim advocates are in helping families get through the most difficult time.

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



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 this summer and fall!

Page 3

Alumni Updates

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



Page 3

Best Practices

Helping families of homicide victims is always a tough job. Learn about the wonderful resources and services the Family Bereavement Center provides to families of homicide victims in Baltimore City

Page 4

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...

Our Victim's Advocate Experience

Gale & Michael Seaton

When our daughter, Stacey Lynne Seaton, was murdered, our family was thrown into an immediate and difficult emotional journey. We would have not survived the experiences Stacey and our family have endured had it not been for our victim and legal advocates at the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center (MCVRC).

Stacey was murdered on June 1st, 2005, in Prince George's County, Maryland. From the moment I showed up at Stacey's murder scene and saw her lifeless body, 'life before' as we knew it was over. We have been living the challenge of 'life since' from that point on, and like many survivors of homicide we have faced numerous obstacles along the way. Our first challenge was our lack of knowledge and understanding of the legal rights we had. In fact, we did not know we had *any* legal rights until we received a call shortly after Stacey's

murder that informed us a package that included some material on victims rights was being mailed to us. Because we didn't understand the information sent to us we ended up making decisions that were not in our best interest. Consequently we spent thousands of dollars in legal fees in an unsuccessful bid to overturn a ruling by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board before we finally sought assistance from MCVRC. With the aid of two of MCVRC staff attorneys we were finally successful in our efforts.

Another challenge we have had to grapple with these past five years is the turnover in personnel within the legal system who have been responsible for the investigation and prosecution of our daughter's case. To date, there have been four different investigators and four different Assistant State's Attorneys assigned to Stacey's case, and for one year we actually did not have any investigator working on the case. Thankfully with the assistance of Roberta Roper we were able to address our concerns with the most recent ASA and the subsequent investigator. But again, without someone to advocate on our behalf, we would still be left in the dark and frustrated with the system.

Another obstacle we, like so many others, have struggled with is understanding all of the legal terminology and the various legal proceedings. Thankfully the advocates at

MCVRC have been diligent in taking the time to explain our rights as victims and have helped us navigate our way through the legal system. For example, when Stacey's assailant was finally charged with her murder this past October, our advocate helped us enroll in the VINE system so we could be apprised of his whereabouts in the system. Even more comforting was that one of the MCVRC attorneys and another homicide survivor, who had been through three trials for the murder of his son, accompanied us to the bond hearing, which was the first time we were face-to-face with our daughter's murderer. Although this was a traumatic day for both Mike and I, having both of these individuals from MCVRC there made the

experience bearable and helped us understand what was going on. Since then, they have accompanied us to all of the different pre-trial hearings and have explained each proceeding so we don't feel so lost. As we continue toward trial, scheduled for this upcoming September, we continue to rely on these advocates to help us understand the process and help us get through each of these painful stages in our journey.

Having attended bi-monthly homicide survivor meetings off and on over the past five years, we have realized that while detectives

(Continued on page 4)



EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings Alumni!

Wow! What an exciting Academy we had this year! The class of 2010 ROCKS!! I was fortunate to get to spend a considerable amount of time with this class and they were such a blast. I am very much looking forward to connecting with each of them throughout the next year and of their involvement with the Alumni Association. If you were not able to attend the Academy this year, I highly recommend you make some time next year to come and connect with the new class; you will get so much out of it on many levels.

This year we started the mentoring program at the Academy and it is really exciting to be able to get connected in this way. I believe the mentor will benefit just as much from this experience as the mentee. I would like to thank Linda Fair and Archie Griffin for all the hard work they did in putting this program together.

And as usual, Deb Stanley, Heather Pfeifer, Elaine Witman, and Dave Thomas did an amazing job at putting the Academy together again this year. Thank you! None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of these four people.

Keep an eye out for some exciting events that will be coming throughout the year - we'll post information in the quarterly newsletters, as well as on the RVAAM website. I hope to see you all very soon!

Wishing you all the best!

Debbie Bradley, 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!

GOCCP: Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention - GOCCP is Maryland's one-stop shop for resources to improve public safety and focuses on educating, connecting, and empowering Maryland's citizens. The website (www.goccp.maryland.gov) provides a number of links to victim resources in Maryland, as well as government programs, that are designed to help those who have lost a loved one to homicide.

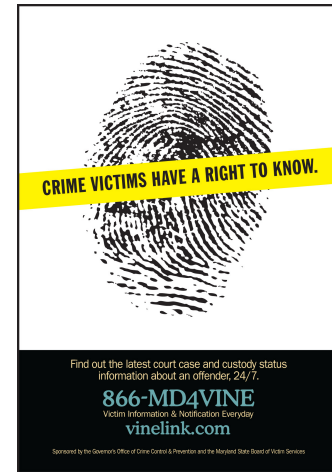
The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services - DPSCS maintains a website that provides an array of information for victims of crime and their families (www.dpscs.state.md.us). Many families who have lost a family member to homicide will be in contact with the Department of Correction and Parole and Probation. Families and advocates can search under the victim services tab to find resources that are available to them and obtain information on how DPSCS operates.

Maryland Community Services Locator - MDCSL is a wonderful resource to help families and professionals find an array of community services, from victim services to mental health services to housing services, in their local area. To locate what services are available in your community go to the MDCSL website at www.mdcsll.org

Parents of Murdered Children - POMC strives to make a difference by providing ongoing emotional support and advocacy to those families who have lost a child to homicide, while also working to reducing child homicide in the broader community through

its education and prevention efforts. To locate what services are available in your community go to the POMC website at <http://www.pomc.com>

VINE: Victim Information and Notification Everyday - This notification system allows victims and their families to obtain information about an offender 24 hours a day (www.vinelink.com). This can provide immeasurable comfort to victims and their families as they have to navigate through the legal process.



Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center - The MCVRC's website (www.mdcrimevictims.org) provides links to both state and national resources for victims of crime. Of particular interest for survivors of homicide, the website can help locate individual, family, and group therapeutic services available in their local community.

Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board - The CICB provides financial assistance for innocent victims of crime. In cases of homicide, the Board may assist with funeral expenses and loss of support on the part of the victim's dependents. For more information on the specific expenses the Board will cover, or how to file a claim go to their website at (http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/victimservs/vs_cicb.shtml)



Save the Date

36th Annual NOVA Conference - "Victim to Victorious! The Journey Continues ..."

August 22 - 25, 2010, Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Salt Lake City, UT

Experience four full days of workshops and plenary sessions on topics including: counseling and advocacy, restorative justice, spiritual and mental health services, special concerns for children, the elderly and victims with disabilities, self care and burnout, and many others. Registration is now open - for more information go to <http://www.trynova.org>

The Baltimore County Department of Social Services and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's 4th Annual Domestic Violence Conference, "In Plain Sight"

September 24th, 2010, 8:30am - 4:00pm, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2004 Greenspring Drive, Timonium, MD

This one day conference provides a great opportunity to network and gain more knowledge about the resources available to assist victims of domestic violence. For more information contact kkeyser@dhr.state.md.us

Office for Victims of Crime - Sexual Assault Advocate/Counselor Training

October 26 - 27, 2010, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA

This two day course is designed to teach advocates how to provide competent, effective crisis intervention services to victims and survivors of sexual assault. Eight training modules are covered.

Register online at www.ovcttac.gov/saact/

RVAAM Alumni & Family Picnic!

Saturday, October 2nd, afternoon - specific park location in Anne Arundel County TBA

Bring your family for a fun-filled afternoon of food, games, and music and the chance to reconnect with old classmates and to meet alums from other classes. More information will be forthcoming, so keep your eyes open for an email!!



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...

Welcome Class of 2010!

Barbara Allen - MD Correctional Training Center

Anthony Alleyne Sr. - The Micology Movement

Darlene Alston - Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Tara Bey -

Anthony Brown - University of Maryland Police

Lauren Brown - Baltimore Department of Social Services

Diane Champe - E. Diane Champe Institute

Monya Cohen - John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children & Adolescents

Kara Dager - Harford County Sheriff's Office, CAC

Christy DeHenzel - University of Baltimore

Rene De La Rosa - Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Colleen Ferguson - Riverdale Park Police Department

Prashani Fonseka - University of Baltimore

Shanita Fowlkes - Baltimore Child Abuse Center

Jennifer Garner - Federal Bureau of Investigation, Victim Services

Pamela Gilmore - Social Security Administration

Dana James - Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office

J.R. Jones - University of Maryland Police

Eva Marie Kenealy - John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children & Adolescents

Autumn Linderborn - University of Baltimore

Mark Matkins - Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Lori McClain - Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office

Theresa Middleton - State's Attorney's Office, Upper Marlboro

Jennifer Nadeau - R.A.D. Systems

Lisa Nordan-Haller - Maryland Division of Parole and Probation

Karen Payne - Prince George's County Health Department

Anthony Robinson - Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice

Bonnita Spikes - MD Case, Citizens Against Executions

Naomi Taffet - CHANA

Teri Williams - A New Direction

Adrienne Witney - Rape Crisis Intervention Service

Kathleen Wright - R.A.D. Systems

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:

New Moves Underway to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

In August 2010, a new system will go into effect in Maryland that will provide an additional layer of protection to victims of domestic violence. The system, called VINE Protective Orders (VPO), is meant to protect domestic violence victims from retaliation when they acquire a protective order. Under VPO, local police will notify the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services within two hours after serving an interim or temporary protective order on an individual; after which DPSCS will enter the information into VINE. For more information, go to http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/news/VP_O-release.pdf

Governor Signs Comprehensive Sex Offender Legislation to Protect Maryland Children and Improve Public Safety

On May 4, 2010, Governor Martin O'Malley was joined by Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. and House Speaker Michael E. Busch in signing tough new laws targeting sexual predators. The legislation mandates lifetime supervision for violent and repeat sexual offenders, increases mandatory minimums for child predators, and updates the sex offender registry in Maryland.

Additional Protections Secured for Victims of Domestic Abuse or Sexual Assault - Secure Housing

Building on the success of the 2009 legislative action to remove guns from the hands of domestic abusers, Governor O'Malley recently signed a bill providing victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault with additional protections. HB1382, introduced by Delegate Cheryl Glenn, allows a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault to terminate a residential lease or request that their locks be changed with certain written notice, including a final protective or peace order. Lt. Governor Brown, the administration's point person for domestic violence policy, worked with legislators and stakeholders to secure passage of this bill.

Best Practices

The Family Bereavement Center - Serving Survivors of Homicide Victims

Homicide victims are unique in that they are not here to tell their stories, nor are they here to assist the Office of the State's Attorney in acquiring justice. Those left behind experience the usual symptoms of grief (i.e., sadness, disturbed sleep patterns, anger, irritability) as well as those of complicated grief (i.e., intense longing for the victim, numbness or detachment, problems accepting the death, lack of trust in others, etc.). The Family Bereavement Center, funded by a federal grant through the Victims of Crime Act, is a program administered by Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office; thus we work as a team to acquire justice, fulfill the needs of the survivors, and inform them of the judicial process.

The Family Bereavement Center (FBC) began its operation in 1990, and is part of the Victim Witness/Community Services Division, which offers financial assistance through the Victims' Emergency Fund. The Center is currently staffed by the director, a therapist, a victim advocate, and a program assistant. The mission of FBC is to offer assistance to those families and individuals coping with grief as a result of a homicide of a family member that occurred in Baltimore City. Upon receiving the 24-hour report for each homicide occurring in Baltimore City, the family is sent a letter outlining the services FBC offers.

Best practice dictates that we meet families' needs at whatever their level, thus we offer a myriad of services. Focusing on grief is only one way the FBC supports surviving family members. Our two most utilized services are court escort services and assistance with criminal injuries compensation applications as many of the families we work with often experience hardships in paying for their loved one's funeral. We also send letters to families that include court dates and case information, which inform them that our victim advocate will, if desired, attend the arraignment and jury trial as well as assist families in writing victim impact statements. We also maintain a list of referral agencies for individuals who may need other services such as substance dependence treatment, crime scene cleanup, medical assistance, along with a myriad of other services.

We recognize that families may find counseling helpful for a period to time, however there may come a point when they no longer want to consistently recount the tragic events surrounding their loved one's death, but may then want to turn their grief into something

more positive. In 1993, a group of survivors from the FBC took such a step to be more proactive and advocate on behalf of victims' families by forming the group Survivors Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE). The group actively lobbied for victims' rights legislation, spoke on a national level about the dangers of handguns, and worked diligently alongside the Stephanie Roper Committee to secure the passage of the Victims' Rights Amendment in the State of Maryland. The FBC continues to work with SAVE to provide information, support and comfort to homicide victims.

Justice looks different for each person. It is difficult for families to feel that justice has been served when crimes remain unsolved. Some people say that there is no such thing as closure for such a tragedy, but it is our hope that no matter the judicial outcome, the staff at FBC can provide some kind of comfort that can sustain them. We know all too well that grief does not end on the last day of trial or on the day of sentencing, it may merely mark a point where the families can now focus on their grief journey. FBC is there to help families get through it, every step of the way.

For more information on the Family Bereavement Center, please contact us at (410) 396-7351.

** Essay contributed by Tanya Bryant, LGSW, Grief Counselor*

Just a Thought (Cont.)

investigate crimes and Assistant State's Attorneys prosecute the offenders, both positions need to remain detached from victims in order to present the best case possible. Therefore the role of the victim advocate is so critical in helping those of us who are thrust on this journey to make it through. Although the experience has been overwhelming at times, we have been able to pick ourselves up and cope thanks to the advocates at MCVRC who virtually saved our lives. These individuals have spent countless hours and weeks helping us understand our rights as victims, and have continued to provide support, companionship, and legal counsel ever since. Mike and I have come to rely heavily upon MCVRC and other advocates associated with this group. We would not be on the path of emotional healing we are presently on if it were not for the people who have helped us get there.

Thank you ..

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 Eva Marie Kenealy, a graduate of the 2010 Academy

My favorite movie is ...

“Remember the Titans” or “Boondock Saints”

The Disney character that best represents my personality is ... Sully from “Monsters, Inc.”

I have two pets, they are ... a cat named Stephen, and a Husky named Storm

My favorite sandwich is ... crabcake!!!

If I could see anyone in concert it would be ... Michael Jackson

Best advice I ever got was ... “Laugh when you can, apologize when you

should, and let go of what you cannot change. Kiss slowly, love deeply, play hard, forgive quickly, take chances, give everything and have no regrets. Life’s too short to be anything - but happy!”

When I was a kid, I wanted to grow up and be ... an FBI agent

The occupation I certainly would not like to have is ... anything related to finance

The quality I appreciate the most in another person is ... compassion

The quality I dislike the most in another person is ... cruelty

Three adjectives that best describe my personality ... resilient, passionate, and determined

My favorite time of year is ... Summer!

What I like best about my job is ... working with the kids and being creative with how to treat/help them

The most challenging thing about my job is ... having to follow or work within a system where children fall through the cracks

The animal that best describes my personality is a ... Tiger because we both are both patient but short-tempered, calm but rebellious, loyal and noble, fearsome but affectionate, free spirits but fiercely territorial.

If I could go anywhere in the world for vacation it would be ... anywhere hot with a beach!

My favorite thing to do to unwind from a rough day is ... martial arts, listen to music, or have a drink with someone I care about

My favorite book is ... too many to choose from! Maybe “A Time to Kill” by John Grisham

The last thing I did to pamper myself was ... bought a new pocketbook from Coach

One of my goals for 2010 is ... get straight A’s in school

Guess what! The RVAAM Alumni Association has a new name!

Recently the RVAAM Alumni Association Executive Board solicited feedback from the entire alumni to come up with a new name for its organization ... thanks for all the feedback! The new name, courtesy of Jennifer Goode (Class of 2005), is “Victim Services Professional Network”

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.

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Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in October 2010