

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #40- January 2016

Just a Thought

Assisting victims of burglary and robbery can pose its own set of unique challenges. One thing they often want help with is to get their belongings back. When this is not possible, restitution can be pursued. Unfortunately, that order often poses its own challenges.

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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 these winter months!

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Alumni Showcase

Read Leslie Connolly's essay on the challenges and rewarding moments she experienced as a the Circuit Court Coordinator in the Carroll County's State's Attorney's Victim-Witness Unit.

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Best Practices

When faced with assisting a victim of burglary or robbery, there are some valuable resources advocates can use to help locate legal services and advocacy, therapeutic counseling, etc.. Keith Gethers has compiled a list every advocate should keep at their desk.

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VSPN Highlights

The RVAAM alumni organization, VSPN, is staying busy and finding ways to keep the alums connected. You can catch up on their recent doings and find out what they are planning for the coming months.

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Just a thought...

Assisting Victims of Burglary, Robbery, and Armed Robbery

Victims' Rights for Justice and Restitution

Whether a person has been the victim of a burglary or a robbery, the rights of that victim have been violated in much the same manner as a victim of an assault. Although the victim may have suffered any injury during the course of the burglary or robbery, there are certain rights in which all victims are entitled - namely justice and restitution.

For most violent crimes like robbery, a patrol officer arrives on the scene and attempts to speak to the victim and witnesses. Once the officer obtains

information about the crime, detectives are called to conduct further investigation, which many include obtaining taped statements from victim(s) and witnesses, presenting a photographic array to said parties in order to identify a suspect, and calling the Mobile Crime Lab to process the crime scene. Despite this follow up, victims sometimes do not receive justice in their case because of the manner in which the crime occurred. The vast majority of robberies occur in a matter of seconds, not giving the victim much of an opportunity to view the suspect who robbed them. Factors such as poor lighting or the presence of a mask on the suspect's face to conceal his or her identity may make the victim's identification of the suspect questionable at least in the minds of a jury, which would cause the jury to not render a guilty verdict if the case were to go to trial.



Burglary cases often face similar difficulties when it comes to prosecuting a case. Most burglaries do not have any witnesses present at the time of the crime. In those rare instances where someone was present, their statement is taken at the scene but often not recorded. Therefore, when it comes time for trial, many witnesses recant their earlier statement.

Without additional evidence, the jury is often fails to render a guilty verdict. Thus many of burglary and robbery victims fail to receive justice from the system that they placed their trust in.

Of course there are cases where a defendant is convicted of a burglary or a robbery - whether through a guilty plea or found guilty after a trial. After such conviction, most victims expect the defendant to return the item(s) or money that was stolen, or to reimburse them for the value of said items. Unfortunately despite the defendant's conviction, challenges exist for these victims to receive full restitution for what they have lost.

One specific challenge many of these victims face is how to prove the actual value

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Happy New Year Alumni!

Don't you just love the beginning of a new year? It signifies a new beginning - a fresh start. So let's all sit down this new year and write some goals. What new thing do you want to see this year? Maybe visit a city/state/country you've never been, or go visit a museum or historical location you've always wanted to see, or go see a play or a concert that is coming to town this year. What new skill do you want to learn this year? Maybe you want to learn how to paint with watercolors or expand your cooking skills, or maybe you want to explore a new fitness routine, like yoga or training for your first 5k. What professional accomplishment do you want to achieve in your career this year? Maybe you want to complete an advanced training or earn a specific certificate, maybe becoming a certified Victim Assistance Specialist, or becoming more active in your professional field or in the alumni organization (VSPN).

Regardless of what goal(s) you decide to pursue this year, it is important you have something to strive for. Goals allow us to challenge ourselves and the status quo. And in turn, they help us to grow as individuals. So pick a goal for 2016 and pursue it with gusto!

We have many exciting plans for RVAAM and VSPN this year and we hope each of you will make it one of your goals (wink wink) to be a part of them.

Wishing you all the best. Until next time ...

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

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Success if finding satisfaction in giving a little more than you take. ~ Christopher Reeve



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!

Office for Victims of Crime - Help Series for Crime Victims

This website provides in depth information on what robbery is, what to do if you are a victim of robbery, and links to organizations that provide support and services for robbery victims. To learn more, go to http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/helpseries/Help-Brochure_Robbery.html

National Center for Victims of Crime

This comprehensive website offers in depth information for victims of crime by helping to put them in touch with appropriate services, resources, and support, as well as provides information on where they may find legal help and support in their community. To learn more, go to: <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/>

Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention

This website provides detailed statistics on the rate and incidence of violent crime in the State of Maryland. The site also offers information regarding where victims of crime may seek support and services within their respective community. For more information, go to: <http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/msac/crime-statistics.php>

Save the Date

VSPN Certification Workshop

January 14th, 2016, University of Baltimore, School of Criminal Justice, 10 West Preston Street [Room 511], Baltimore, MD

Want to know how to become a certified Victim Assistance Specialist in Maryland? Then join us at this workshop to learn how to fill out the application properly, get the inside scoop on the testing protocol, and ask any other questions you might have about the process. Space is limited, so please contact Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII to register (bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org).

2016 RVAAM Academy

June 6th-10th, 2016, Bon Secours Spiritual Retreat Center, Marriottsville, MD



Mark your calendars! The 13th annual RVAAM Academy is scheduled for the first week of June at the lovely Bon Secours. Go to the RVAAM website (www.rvaam.org) to download a copy of this year's application and pass it along to your colleagues!

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!

- **Jennifer Burton (Class of 2011)** - This past October, Jenn got married to her long-time love, Chris Cobleigh, and is now Mrs. Jennifer Cobleigh - congratulations to you both on your nuptials, we wish you both many, many happy years! And if that wasn't enough excitement, Jenn was also recruited by Mount St. Mary's University to become an adjunct on their faculty to teach Crime Analysis and Crime Mapping to their undergraduates. Way to go Jenn!
- **Linda (Fair) Garnett (Class of 2006)** - Linda recently passed the licensed graduate social work exam and is now a LGSW! Way to go Linda, we are so, so proud of you!
- **Robert Roper** - Roberta will be stepping down as the Chair person for the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, and **Debbie Tall (Class of 2004)** will be taking over the reins. A heartfelt thanks to Roberta for her many years of service and endless advocacy for every victim of crime in the state of Maryland. And congratulations to Debbie on this new and very important position - we know you will do a wonderful job!
- **Elizabeth Rosendale (Class of 2014)** - Elizabeth completed her police academy training this past June and is now a Baltimore County police officer. Way to go Elizabeth!
- **Lauren Summers (Class of 2006)** - Lauren was recently promoted to now serve as the Lead Court Advocate in the Family Violence Unit at the Adult and Community Services Division of the Baltimore County Department of Social Services. We wish you all the best in your new position!
- **Arneisha Woods (Class of 2015)** - Arneisha was accepted into the University of Baltimore's post-masters program to prepare for the state

board for her LGPC. Way to go Arneisha, we know you are going to knock it out of the park!



Alumni Showcase

My Journey in Victim Services

As a former member of the Carroll County State's Attorney's Victim Witness Unit, my title was Circuit Court Coordinator. I handled all of the felony cases (e.g., homicide, vehicular homicide, 1st degree assault, etc.) - pretty much all the bad stuff. The only cases I did not handle involved child sexual abuse or rape cases. Those were handled by the Unit's director, however I assisted on many of those cases when she was not available.

As the Circuit Court Coordinator, I served as the first point of contact for most victims. Thus, I was responsible for advising them of their rights (notification, restitution, victim impact statement, etc.), helping them fill out the different forms when they wanted to apply for specific services (e.g., Crime Victim Notification Form, application to the Criminal Injury Compensation Board), and keeping them apprised of all of the various hearings and court dates that were associated with their individual case. I also would accompany victims and their families to court and remain with them so I could answer any questions they might have about the proceedings. For the victims who chose not to be present at a particular hearing, I always sent them a disposition letter

that outlined what had transpired so they would have a written record of the outcome. Needless to say, I was kept very busy!

While I found my work very rewarding on one hand, I also felt a sense of frustration. The most frustrating part of my work was feeling that the defendant had more rights than the victims. Many of the victims I served expressed this sentiment to me over and over again, and on one level, I had to agree with them. The last minute postponements or other stall tactics defendants and their attorneys would use right before going to trial were especially frustrating. Many victims and their families had rearranged their schedules, made child care arrangements, and sometimes traveled a great distance to be present, only to be told that their case had been postponed. In those instances I could understand a victim's frustration, and even anger, at the system.

However there were many rewarding moments in my work. The greatest satisfaction came from when the state was able to secure a conviction, especially if the case involved a death or a sexual assault. There were many times a victim (or the family) would want to sit in the courtroom after the guilty verdict so they could watch the defendant taken out in handcuffs. That seemed to bring a lot of satisfaction to them, and on some level, I believe it gave them a bit of closure. I also experienced a great deal of satisfaction when I was able to help a victim secure restitution for some of the financial losses they had incurred. In one particular case, I remember the judge ordered a defendant to repay \$40,000 to a woman he had swindled. The day I handed her the final check that repaid the total debt she just sat in my arms and cried.

Another thing I look back on with fondness is at several partnerships the Unit formed while I was there which allowed us to provide better wrap-

around service to victims and their families. One of these partnerships was with K-Pets, who allowed us the use of a few of their therapy dogs during the interview process to help relieve some of the stress and anxiety that many victims experienced. Although the dogs were not allowed to accompany any of our victims into the courtroom, they did provide both our child and adult victims some comfort during a very tough time in their lives, and showed them we truly cared for their well-being.



Another partnership I really appreciated was with Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA). This was a group of bikers who would befriend one of our younger victims and provide emotional support to them as they went through the criminal justice process. They would offer to attend bail reviews, court hearings, and during the trial to provide the victim some additional emotional support. They also donated coloring books, crayons, and other toys for our child interview room. They truly are a wonderful and compassionate group of individuals, and I encourage all of you to look them up on the web to learn more about their organization.

During my time in the Victim Witness Unit, I was also fortunate enough to witness firsthand the enactment of several pieces of legislation that positively affected the way victims were perceived and treated by the legal system. I was especially heartened to see more judges become more aware of the victim's role (and rights) in a case, and make a concerted effort to ensure that their voice was heard.

Although I am no longer working in this position, I genuinely believe the positive changes the Victim Witness Unit made while I was there has created a culture that encourages more victims to come forward and seek assistance from the criminal justice system. Although the job was undoubtedly one of the most difficult I have ever had, it also was one of the most rewarding. I am proud that I was able to provide the victims I served the assistance they needed and treated them with the empathy and dignity that they deserved.

Essay contributed by Leslie J. Connolly (Class of 2012).

Best Practices

Assisting Victims of Burglary, Robbery, or Armed Robbery

A large number of crime victim advocates are expected to be 'general practitioners' - knowing how to assist every victim, regardless of the offense. However, there are many different types of crimes, so some advocates, like doctors, also choose a specialization. But for those who don't, it's important that they educate themselves so that they have a common understanding of different offenses, and become familiar with the processes that help connect victims to the resources they need.

When faced with assisting a victim of a burglary, a robbery, or an armed robbery, it's important to first understand the basic definition of each offense.

- *Burglary* - also commonly referred to as breaking and entering, is considered a property crime that involves the unlawful entry into a building or home for the purpose of committing

an offense. Usually that offense is theft, but it also can involve other illegal activities.

- *Robbery* - is a crime against a person and involves the taking or attempting to take anything of value by force, threat of force, or by putting the victim in fear.
- *Armed Robbery* - also a crime against a person, involves the use of a weapon to facilitate the taking of the property of another, and has the potential to involve levels of physical injury.

Unfortunately robberies and burglaries are not a rare event in the United States. According to the 2013 Crime Clock published by the FBI, a robbery occurs every 1.5 minutes, and a burglary occurs every 16.4 seconds. According to the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, in 2013, there were 31,889 breaking and entering offenses and 10,082 robberies reported to law enforcement. Annually, only a small proportion of these offenses move through the criminal justice system. Regardless, there still is work for advocates. The unexpected and sometimes sudden nature



of these sorts of crimes contributes to: fear, embarrassment, anger, hopelessness, paranoia about reoccurrence, and depression. Some victims also have to deal with the

difficulties of recuperating from physical injuries suffered during the event. While taking a burglary or robbery report may amount to just another day at the office for a law enforcement officer (and some officers may display a similarly suited demeanor), it is critical that advocates convey to a victim that they are there to help them get through the restoration process.

To be effective and relative, it is important for crime victim advocates to es-

establish and maintain helpful professional relationships; to regularly seek job-related training; to update directories; and to regularly audit programs. This ensures that when they connect victims to resources, they are casting as wide a net as possible to capture the most comprehensive resources available. When evaluating program processes and efforts, keep in mind there are two broad categories: government-based systems and non-government based systems.

Government-based systems are formalized groups or organizations dedicated to a function in an established framework.

This is the category that should contain federal, state, and local government resources, such as the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, or in Maryland, the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. Non-government based system resources will include nonprofits, faith-based resources, or private insurance and employee assistance programs.

Having a sound screening process will allow advocates to determine the type of crime, its effects, and the most appropriate services and resources to make a referral to. To assist with this process, here are a few of the resources located across the state that advocates may use:

- **The State's Attorney's Office in each county (and Baltimore City)** - each office has a victim/witness assistance coordinator who can answer questions about the court process, provide victims with information



about their case, assist victims in applying for criminal injury compensation, and give referrals to community victim service programs. To locate the State's Attorneys' Office in your jurisdiction, go to www.mdsaa.org, or call (410) 203-9881.

- **The "Victim Services in Maryland" webpage on the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services** - this

website allows victims to track the incarceration status of offenders, as well as the whereabouts of released offenders. The site also provides information on financial compensation, and a list of public and private victim service providers.

- **The Statewide Victim Services Directory on the Maryland Community Services Locator** - to explore this directory, go to www.mdcs.org

- **The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board** - CICB provides financial assistance for non-culpable victims of crime.

The Board may compensate victims who suffer physical injury for their medical expenses and loss of earnings. In cases of homicide, the Board may assist with funeral expenses and loss of support on the part of the victim's dependents. To speak with a CICB representative, call (410) 585-3010 or toll-free at (888) 679-9347.

- **The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center** - MCVRC offers legal advocacy services to crime victims, along with a wide range of other services, including therapeutic counseling, education about all victims rights, and referrals to other victim service programs in the community. To contact MCVRC, call 1-877-VICTIM-1
- **The State Victim Services Coordinator and the State Victims' Rights**

Compliance Coordinator - both of these offices are located within the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. To contact either coordinator, call (410) 821-2828 or toll-free at (877) 687-9004.

Essay contributed by Keith Gethers.



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.roaam.org 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 es-

say/ 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 Victims' Rights training and 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 Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete written exam; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.

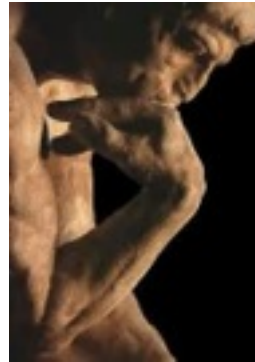
* **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete oral presentation; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials and study guides for the written exams are available online at www.rvaam.org (click

on the Certification tab at the top of the page). For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

Just a Thought (Cont.)

of the items taken. For instance, if a defendant took an item from a victim such as a television or a piece of jewelry, often times, the victim does not have the receipt to prove the amount he or she paid for the item. Therefore, the victim will have to approximate the value of the item, and if the defendant disagrees with the amount, the Court may order a restitution hearing where the victim has to testify under oath as to the value of the item(s). The victim testifying as to the monetary value of the items taken and being subjected to cross-examination by defense counsel and having their credibility attacked, has the potential of further traumatizing the victim.



Another challenge the victim faces in restitution is actually receiving any money from the defendant. As part of the disposition in the case, the defendant may be ordered by the Court to pay restitution to the victim. For instance, as part of the defendant's probation, he/she will be ordered to pay a certain sum to victim through the Department of Parole and Probation. However when the Court orders restitution, the judge not only considers the victim's losses, but also the defendant's ability to pay. In some instances, the Court may reduce the total amount because the defendant is going to be incarcerated for a long period of time

(hence their earning potential is significantly limited). In other instances, the Court may order a defendant to pay the full amount but put them on a payment plan based on their income. Ultimately the amount the defendant is able to pay could be such a minimal amount that that the victim has to wait for years before receiving any restitution, and for some victims, they will never receive any money.

However, in cases where the defendant is able to pay, the Court may enforce restitution orders in an effort to comply with the conditions of their probation. Therefore, if the defendant fails to make the payments as ordered, the victim may ask the probation agent

to advise the Court so that the defendant's probation can be violated for failure to pay. If the defendant is found guilty of violating on these grounds, he or she may be sanctioned. This might include re-incarceration or converting the restitution order to a civil judgement. Although the civil judgment allows the victim to collect restitution from defendants over a longer period of time, the victim may need to

hire an attorney to enforce the judgment. This bears out an additional and unnecessary expense for the victim.

Victim service providers play a critical role in helping to restore the well-being of victims of burglary and robbery. Often times, these individuals are upset and angry, and they feel like they will never get their belongings back. Moreover, many feel afraid to return to the location where the crime occurred. Victim service providers can not only offer emotional support, but can help to provide these victims with resources that will help them with safety planning and inform them of their legal rights and protections while they navigate the criminal justice system. For example, they can help with victim impact statements, which will allow the victim to express to the Court and the defendant how much harm the

defendant has caused (emotional, physical, financial) and may also help the victim to submit comments to the probation agent and/or the Court if the defendant violates the terms of his or her probation.

Although there are many barriers victims of burglary and robbery face in achieving justice in their case, victim service providers are instrumental in breaking down those barriers and helping to restore these individuals' lives and spirits.

Essay contributed by ASA Arcelia Green

VSPN Highlights

On Saturday December 19th, VSPN held their 4th annual holiday party fundraiser event. Every year we pick a deserving family who has suffered a victimization and we help them to have a wonderful Christmas. This year we partnered with the University of Maryland Medical Center's E-Care telemedicine, who provided the family with all of the gifts on their wish list. In addition, Marzana Parvin, who nominated the family, held a fundraiser on campus at the University of Baltimore in which she painted beautiful henna tattoos, and at the Christmas party, VSPN raffled off a beautiful Christmas wreath. These two initiatives allowed VSPN to give the family \$220 in cash on top of all of the gifts from UMMC! It was a wonderful party, and everyone enjoyed the Chinese gift exchange, the delicious food, and the great holiday music provided by Elmer Pace (aka, Tom). Best of all, we all got to see all of our VSPN friends!

VSPN would like to give a shout out to the Baltimore Child Abuse Center for serving over 1,000 children in 2015! They provided invaluable services to

all of these children, and have played a key role in these young victims' healing process. Way to go BCAC - thank you for all that you do for the children in Baltimore City!

Alumni Birthdays

Next time you run into the following alums, wish them a belated happy birthday! We hope each of you had a wonderful birthday and we wish you many, many more.

Tina McKnight (Class of 2005) - December 8th

Jessica Dickerson (Class of 2004) - December 11th

Karen Darby (Class of 2015) - December 25th



What do you want to hear? Have any news to share?

Are you itching to learn more 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 would be beneficial for our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have about a topic to

profile in one of our upcoming newsletters to Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org ... We also are happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!

Alumni Directory

The 2015 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) 836-5490.

Editorial Board

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Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2016