

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #44- April 2017

Just a Thought

Wonder how you can convince a fellow colleague to attend the Academy. Why not share with them this essay written by one your alums, Claudia Ahwireng, about her experiences at the 2016 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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Alumni Showcase

Read ShaDonna Brooks' essay about her experiences as a Victim/Witness Coordinator in the Special Victims & Family Violence Unit in the Office of the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County, and how her experiences at the Academy have enabled her to better serve her clients. **Page 3**

Certification News

Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section lays out the criteria of each level of certification, along with the requirements.
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News From the Field

It's always important to try to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. Read about two bills that are were recently passed.
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Just a thought...

Life after the Academy

Discovering an Unexpected Community and Opening Doors to Future Opportunities

The Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland (RVAAM) is a unique experience that connects victim service providers and allied professionals with professional training and personal growth opportunities during a week-long retreat. As a member of the Class of 2016, the connections I made at the training has assisted me in my job as a Victim Advocate with a nonprofit. Held in a beautiful retreat in Marriottsville, participants are afforded the space to explore ideas with other service providers on how we might better serve victims, as well as engage in a variety of self-care activities that help

teach participants how we may better take care of ourselves. But we all know that training events - whether face-to-face or online - are primarily focused on knowledge transfer or skill development. "The real learning takes place after the retreat has ended, when you are back on the job, applying what you have studied and learned from the experience on a continual basis," says Susan Shea, victim services coordinator for the Maryland Division of Probation and Parole and fellow classmate of the 2016 Academy. Before she came to the Academy, Susan confessed she had a lot of reservations about attending a retreat for an entire week. "I have a life outside of work, including family responsibilities and a son who depends on me" Susan shared. Yet, she was allowed to stay in contact with her son while at the Academy and she noted, she was finally able to take some time for herself. "I really enjoyed the art therapy session and some of the other



personal development workshops that were built into the retreat," Susan shared. "Overall, the Academy taught me a lot about the victim services landscape in Maryland and enabled me to meet so many victim service providers from different agencies."

Another graduate of the 2016 class, Dee Smith, the Victim Services Coordinator at the Division of Probation and Parole, noted that she felt that all of the workshops were very applicable to her current position. "I really enjoyed the workshop about reading body language. I now actively pay attention to a victim's body language and am more aware of my own. I learned that a victim is more willing to trust you with assisting with their needs if your body language conveys that you care." She further noted, "overall, my experience at the Academy taught me there are a number of different entities available to assist a victim, including clinicians, case managers, as well as advocates. Being at the Academy provided me with the knowledge on how to identify all of these

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Happy Spring VSPN!

I don't know about you, but I am so happy to see the change of season! Finally, warmer temperatures and budding flowers to show us that winter is over and summer is just around the corner. And with all of those changes comes many activities that I know you are going to want to be a part of.

First, let's get those applications out to your co-workers and friends to attend this year's upcoming Academy. Spaces are filling up fast, so don't wait! Also, don't forget, every year during the Academy, RVAAM provides advanced training for alums, so make sure you set aside some time that week so you can attend. You won't want to miss this one!

Second, there have been lots of pre-certification training classes over the past few months. Let's get those applications in so you can show everyone that you are a cut above the rest! And for those of you who are already certified, I will be leading an Ethics training in May that you won't want to miss. Remember, this is a required course for your continued certification, so be sure to check out the Save the Date for details.

Finally, VSPN is looking for your input on how we can better serve each and every one of you. So please reach out to the VSPN co-chairs to share your ideas, or let them know if you would like to become more involved. We would love to hear what you have to say!

I hope I will see many of you during this busy spring season. Until next time - take care of yourselves!

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org

Your mind is a garden. Your thoughts are the seeds. You can grow flowers, or you can grow weeds. ~ Anonymous



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!

NEW RVAAM WEBSITE!!

Unfortunately, this past winter we discovered the Academy site had been hacked, so we had to create a new one from scratch. Happily, we believe we created a site that is even better than the original. Not only does it contain more information and resources, it is easy to navigate. So be sure to check the new site out, and add this new address to your favorites on all of your electronic devices. To see the new site, go to: www.rvaam.us

Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN)

The alumni organization affiliated with the Roper Victim Assistance Academy, VSPN advocates for the professionalization of the field of victim services. In addition to supporting and collaborating with the Academy, RVAAM 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. To learn more, check out their Facebook page at [VSPN Roper](#), or subscribe to their Twitter account [@VSPN 2011](#).

Save the Date



2017
RVAAM
Academy

June 5th-9th, 2017, Bon Secours Spiritual Retreat Center, Marriottsville, MD

Mark your calendars! The 14th 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.

V-Step Regional Training, Northern Region

May 15th-16th, 2017, Harford Community College, 401 Thomas Run Road, Bel Air, Maryland

The 2017 training topic, *Trauma Tools and Responses*, will take attendees on a journey beginning with a victim's perspective of a crime, to understanding trauma and SELF, and then providing participants with a set of critical tools that will enable service providers and first responders to more effectively work with victims of crime. The training will conclude with learning skills and protocols to build collaborative relationships within your organization and partnerships within your community. In addition, certification testing and pre-certification training will be offered.

Training is free and RVAAM alumni will be given priority registration.

Day 1, 8:30am-4:30pm, in Darlington Hall Room 126; Day 2, 8:30am-3:30pm, in Darlington Hall Room 228. Register at the Eventbrite web link below: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/v-step-northern-regional-victim-services-2-day-training-tickets-33332999900>

Ethics in Victim Services Training

May 19th, 2017, 9:00am-12:00pm,
University of Baltimore, Room TBA.

To register, contact Debbie Bradley -
bradleyd@harfordsheriff.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...

Look at Our Movers & Shakers!

- **Dr. Debra Stanley, Director of RVAAM** - Let's wish Dr. Stanley a heartfelt belated birthday - she celebrated her birthday with family and friends at the end of March. Unfortunately, while visiting her brother and his family in Europe over her birthday, she fell and fractured her shoulder. Ouch! That is not the kind of birthday gift anyone would want. So, please send her your well wishes and healing thoughts for a speedy recovery. We know she'll be back on her feet all too soon - you can't keep her down!
- **Linda Garnett (Class of 2006)** - Birthday wishes also need to go out to our own beloved Linda! We wish you all good things this upcoming year, and we hope your special day was marked with laughter and love.

Alumni Showcase

Shining a Light in Dark Corners

I presently work as a Victim/Witness Coordinator in the Special Victims & Family Violence Unit in the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office. My duties center around assisting victims and witnesses as they navigate the criminal justice system, and helping them by explaining the process. As such, I regularly update victims and witnesses on their cases, interview victims and witnesses, locate missing witnesses, and provide courtroom support and accompaniment. I also direct victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse to the different resources in the community.

During my years as a Victim/Witness Coordinator, I have observed that people have become more aware of the need for services, and I have also seen how the courts have tried to take a more therapeutic approach to working with and responding to victims of crime. Fortunately, the State's Attorney's Office has made establishing community and resource partnerships a priority. For example, my office is connected with the Prince George's Hospital Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Center to enable our staff to provide the best care and support for the people we serve.

As much progress as we have made in how we respond to and assist victims of crime, education is still lacking in this field. There are still too many misconceptions and a general lack of understanding about how and why victims underreport, or why they want to return to their abuser. If the community as whole were better educated about the financial and emotional dependency issues so many victims struggle with, we would surely change our approach to how we work with these individuals.

One of the best educational experiences I have had was attending the Roper Academy. During my week at the Academy, I learned so many useful tools that I have since incorporated into my work. For example, I have used the breathing techniques I learned to help prepare witnesses before they testify in court. I also gained a better understanding of all of the roadblocks many victims experience when trying to navigate the system, which has increased my empathy for the victims and witnesses I come into contact with, which has made me more patient. I also have shared what I have learned with my colleagues so they too can better understand a victim's perspective. Ultimately, I came to appreciate that every person and every situation I am exposed to in my job is different. My job is not to judge them or even offer advice. I am here to listen to their story.

I see it as a great honor and a privilege to work with victims of crime. It is a profession I never knew could help me learn more about the compassionate nature of people in one of their darkest hours. Oftentimes, although I believe that I am here to help them, in actuality, each one of them has been able to teach me invaluable life lessons I could never learn in any book.

Essay contributed by ShaDonna M. Brooks (Class of 2014).

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 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.us (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming prep classes, as well as classes on ethics for renewals. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

Congratulations!

Dana Spence - Level I Maryland Victim Assistance Specialist



News From The Field

SB 655/HB 895: Horse Racing - Prizes - Intercepts for Restitution and Child Support Payments - The Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to vote on a bill that would prohibit offenders, who have failed to pay court ordered restitution, to collect on their gambling winnings. All monies would instead go directly to their victim(s). The bill was first read on February 20, 2017.

SB 694/ HB 723: Inmates - Life Imprisonment - Parole Reform - The Maryland legislators are considering repealing certain provisions that provide inmates who are serving a life sentence may be paroled only with the Governor's approval. Currently, once the parole board makes the decision that someone with a life sentence is eligible for parole, the Governor has 180 days to deny the board's decision. The bill, if passed, would leave parole-making decisions solely to the state's parole commission. The bill has passed the House and is currently working through 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 inquires regarding either program, or to request brochures, please contact Stanley Lofton at DPSCS.



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!

Just a Thought (Cont.)

resources, to create a plan, or to make recommendations to meet a victim's needs.

I had a similar experience when I returned from the Roper Victim Assistance Academy. I thought I had learned everything I needed to know, but the first time I was confronted with a crime victim survivor who was expecting me to assist with his restitution case, I couldn't figure out where to start. But then I remembered the connections I made at the Academy. While in the past, I have disliked networking events because many people approach such events as a way of passing out the maximum number of business cards in the minimum amount of time, and exchange little more than a passing smile. That was definitely not how things unfolded at the Academy! Throughout the week, we were afforded the opportunity to interact and really get to know fellow victim service providers from all over the state, and learned about all of the different agencies and resources that we could access when we returned to our jobs. Moreover, because we spent

so much time together in and out of the classroom, many of the participants developed actual friendships. It was from one of these connections that I figured out where to go to find the information I needed. I was able to reach out to one of my classmates who was a Victim Service Coordinator for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to get my questions answered about how a victim could follow-up on a restitution order in a particular case. And as such, I was able to help this young man. Since then, I have continued to build my professional network among my fellow RVAAM alums, and have even had the opportunity to help out one of my peers when they were looking for some information and resources. In sum, my time at the Academy was invaluable. It not only provided me with tools and resources that I have been able to immediately incorporate into my job, but it has also opened the door to some wonderful friendships that have enabled me to be the best victim service provider possible.

*Essay contributed by Claudia Ahwireng
(Class of 2016)*

A Note of Thanks

Dear Roper Family,

Thank you so very much for all of the genuine acts of kindness shown to me and my family during the recent loss of my husband, Tyrone L. Garnett, Sr. Your love, support, and prayers were truly overwhelming and helped to sustain us day to day. Given the incredible outpouring of support, we were unable to write individual thank you notes to each of you. However, please know that your generosity and thoughtfulness touched us deeply. Knowing that we were not alone helped us to bear our grief and sadness. Again, thank you for being there.

Linda Garnett

Alumni Directory

The 2016 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 Anne Litecky via email at alitecky@ubalt.edu or by phone at (410) 836-5490.



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**Watch for the next edition of the
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