

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #6 - April 2007

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Just a thought...

Victim Services within the State's Attorney's Office

Peggy Basham

"The mission of the Baltimore County State's Attorney's Office is to prosecute the felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile cases occurring in Baltimore County. This includes the screening of cases, presentation for charging, trial preparation, and presentation of evidence. It is our goal to be an advocate for the victim and the citizens of Maryland by presenting a professional prosecution. Our mission is to serve victims and witnesses, to provide them information, and to comfort and assist them with problems related to their cases." *Baltimore County Website.*

As a member of a prosecutor-based Victim/Witness Assistance Unit, I have found it very enlightening to realize the vast differences in victim services available based on jurisdiction. Each county in Maryland, along with Balti-

more City has an elected State's Attorney. Each State's Attorney may have a different idea on what and how victim services shall be offered through his or her office; and each jurisdiction has vastly different resources upon which to draw.



Victim Services in Baltimore County SAO

Compliance with the 1996 Crime Victim Notification Act, and the 1994 Constitutional Amendment, remains the cornerstone of our efforts. I am fortunate to belong to a unit comprised of 10 people, including support staff. This is neither the largest nor the smallest unit in the State. Our staff serves victims and witnesses at both the District and Circuit Court levels. Most of our efforts come in the

form of correspondence and telephone calls, communicating with victims and witnesses regarding the initiation, progress, and outcome of their cases. We respond to their questions and issues, and refer them to agencies that may be able to assist them with problems arising out of their victimization. We gather Victim Impact Statements and restitution information. In some circumstances we provide court accompaniment, and attend pre-trial conferences. We arrange transportation, lodging, and food when necessary. Our office sponsors a monthly peer support group for Families of Homicide and Drunk Driving Fatality Victims, and publishes a quarterly newsletter for current and former group members. I co-facilitate the support group and write the newsletter.

The Adversarial System and the Victim

One of the most interesting aspects of being a prosecutor-based advocate rests in the notion that in a criminal case, the Government is the plaintiff, rather than the victim. The prosecutor's "clients" therefore are the citizens of the jurisdiction, not just the victim. Thus, there may sometimes be conflict. What the victim perceives as a just outcome may not be what the State deems appropriate for the common good. While a good prosecutor will always take the victim's perspective into consideration, the decision on how to proceed ultimately belongs to the State.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings Alumni!

Wow, what an exciting time of year! Spring is almost here and the winter weather is soon to be just an afterthought. And it's that time of year that everyone is promoting the "Power of One-to-One" for recruiting new Academy members. This year's Academy will be held June 4th - 8th at the Maryland Public Safety Education and Training Center. If you know of anyone who you think will benefit from this amazing Academy, have them go to the website at <http://rvaam.ubalt.edu> or contact Dr. Debra Stanley before April 13th at dstanley@ubalt.edu. Also, if you are interested in assisting at this year's Academy, please let Kathy Masterson or Jessica Dickerson know as soon as possible what days and times you would be available. This year advanced training will also be offered during the Academy for all alumni - more details to follow. We look forward to another successful and productive Academy!

On another note - a series of focus groups are being scheduled across the state to discuss the role and importance of credentialing victim service providers. Make sure you check out one of the focus groups in your region so that you can come and have your questions answered and your voice heard about this very important issues to our field. The first focus group was held in Southern Maryland at the Prince George's Community College at the end of March. Two more focus groups are currently being scheduled for Western Maryland and Eastern Maryland. When the dates and times are selected, we will be sure to notify you through our group listserve. I know all of our calendars are rather full, but attendance is very important for anyone involved in victim services, so we hope you will come and have your voice be heard.

I would also like to remind everyone of the upcoming American Society of Victimology's national symposium that will be held at the University of Baltimore this upcoming April 11th-13th. Alumni can attend the entire conference for the student rate of \$50.00. You don't want to miss hearing how victim services are provided across the nation, as well as in other corners of the world. A number of advanced trainings will be available for alums

during the symposium. The Alumni Association will be sponsoring a cocktail party fundraiser at the symposium on its opening night. We are looking for volunteers to help run this event. If you are able to help out, please let me know via email as soon as possible

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to welcome our new members to the RVAAM Executive Board - Reverend Brian Murray, Heather Courtney, Valda Rotolo, and Bob Ertter. Our new president is Bonnie (Cord) Robertson, and I am the new Vice-President. We all hope to make this a very productive team and to carry on the endeavors that the former officers have so diligently crafted.

I look forward to seeing you at our many upcoming events, and I wish you all the best!

Debbie Creswell, Editor

creswelld@harfordsheriff.org

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. So, here are some sites we thought you might find useful ... happy surfing!

<http://netsmartz411.org> - This website presented by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children serves as parents and guardians premier, online resource for answering questions about internet safety and computers .

<http://loveisrespect.org> -The online home of the National Teen Dating Hotline, the site offers support and information about dating abuse. A trained advocate is available 24/7.

www.mcasa.org - The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault is an organization that works to end sexual violence through advocacy, education, community outreach, and technical assistance.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov> - Formerly the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, the Child Welfare Information Gateway provides access to information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families.

www.ncpc.org - The National Crime Prevention Council's mission is to provide information to help people keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe from crime. The NCPC produces tools that communities can use to learn crime prevention strategies, engage community members, and coordinate with local agencies.

News From the Field

VOCA FUND AT RISK AGAIN!



Justice Solutions has been asking to have the VOCA cap for FY 2007 set to at least at \$665 million, excluding the Anti-terrorism Emergency Reserve (AER), in order to keep VOCA assistance grants at the FY 2006 level. Including the AER, under the cap would reduce state assistance grants by as much as \$50 million. The House Appropriations Committee's submitted their Bill this week, setting the VOCA cap at only \$625 million. The Committee has reassured us that the cap does not include the AER and the Congressional Crime Victims Caucus is working with the Committee to ensure that the Department of Justice follows the statute by excluding the AER when calculating grant amounts. Meanwhile, they are also working with their supporters in the Senate to secure fair funding for victim services. Keep writing your Senators to keep the VOCA funds where they are!!

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR MURDER VICTIMS RESOLUTION

Representatives John Shadegg (AZ) and Steve Chabot (OH) are introducing a resolution for a National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims. Rep. Shadegg is preparing to introduce the bill shortly and is seeking original co-sponsors before he goes to the floor. Please assist in helping to get this important memorial enacted by contacting your member of Congress and asking him or her to be a co-sponsor. Once it is dropped on the floor, we will have a resolution number. If you have any questions, you may contact Natalie Farr from Rep. Shadegg's office at (202) 225-3361 or Dan Levey, the National President of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. at (602) 364-2235.



Just a thought...

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Thus the goal of the Victim Witness Assistance Unit is to provide crime victims and witnesses with information regarding the status of their cases, in order to minimize trauma and inconvenience, *and* to enhance prosecution by ensuring the cooperation of victims and witnesses. Therefore, prosecutor-based advocates need to serve both the prosecutor and the victim. The prosecutor needs the victim's testimony as an important part of the case. The victim may have suffered physical, emotional, and financial injury and trauma as a result of their victimization. We must advocate for both, responding to the victim in a way that is sincerely empathetic and supportive, and which also complies with laws and legal procedures. We must help them transition from one part of the criminal justice system to the next without letting them 'fall through the cracks.' Although our formal involvement begins with the filing of a criminal case and ends when the case is complete, it is not uncommon for us to be involved sooner, and later, as circumstances may dictate.

Above all, we must strive to avoid and prevent re-victimization within the criminal justice process. I believe we achieve this through honest sharing of information, direct answers to questions, the creation of realistic expectations, and a willingness to do a little bit more than what may be required. Our unit members are people to people, not just government to citizen.

Peggy Basham is the Director of the Baltimore County State's Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Assistance Unit

Hot Topics

It's that time of year again, when the bitter winter winds surrender to warm spring breezes, and hints of the summer season start to emerge ... and with these change of seasons comes the time to start recruiting applicants for the 2007 Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland! This year's Academy will be held from June 4th-8th at the Maryland Public Safety Education and Training Center in Sykesville, MD

Last year, the classes of 2004 and 2005 were given a challenge to recruit at least one person to apply for the Academy. This program was called the "Power of One-to-One" and resulted in a successful, diverse class of 2006. This year, we extend this challenge again to all the classes and ask that each of you participate. It's not hard, all you have to do is provide information to at least one person ... yes... just ONE person, and encourage them to apply. You can direct interested applicants to the Academy's website at <http://rvaam.ubalt.edu> where they can download an application, or they can email Dr. Debra Stanley to request a hard-copy or to receive additional information (dstanley@ubalt.edu).

Some of you may wonder why you are being asked to recruit applicants when there are brochures and a marketing committee who is out in the community giving recruitment presentations. The answer is simple - there is no better form of advertising than word of mouth by those who have already experienced the Academy. No brochure can convey what you personally experienced the week you spent at the Academy. Your personal recommendation speaks volumes to the potential applicant and allows them to gain insight as to what to expect. In addition, if that person applies and is accepted, you can serve as their mentor during and after the Academy. Some alumni did just that for the class of 2006 and it resulted in having attendees better prepared for Academy life, and has kept them involved through the Alumni Association.

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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 almost passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...

Debbie Creswell (2005) - Debbie, our very own Alumni Vice-President, is engaged to be married. A June 2008 wedding is in the works - and don't worry, she has reassured the Academy faculty and Alumni Executive Board it won't take place until AFTER the Academy :)

Linda Fair (2006) - Linda was a guest speaker for the University of Baltimore's Hoffberger Center for Professional Ethics on March 6th, to speak about the 'ethics of mentoring.' Approximately 75 students and faculty attended, and listened to Linda talk about the ethical dilemmas of working with today's youth and the benefits of workplace mentoring. Linda is the creator and founder of a successful youth mentoring program and a beneficiary of several mentoring relationships. Way to go Linda!

Norma Harley (RVAAM Steering Committee Member) - Norma was recently named as one of Maryland's Top 100 Women by the Maryland Daily Record in recognition of her efforts in implementing the Prince George's County Sheriff's Department Domestic Violence Unit.

Sharon Leasure (2005) - Sharon recently experienced a change in careers that has moved her away from victim services and has accepted a position to be a Tourist Associate in the visitor center at the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and Appalachian Trail. As such, she has decided to take a break from serving on the RVAAM Alumni Executive Board and as the Assistant Editor of our newsletter. We want to thank Sharon for all of the time she has devoted to the Alumni Association and for her infectious enthusiasm she has

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Hot Topics

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If you are wondering just who you should be recruiting to apply for this year's Academy, all you need to do is look around you and see who is working with victims of crime. They could be those who work in the State's Attorney's Offices, the Department of Social Services, or in local law enforcement. They could also be faith leaders, or a volunteer at the local sexual assault center. They are all around you! All you have to do is reach out to one and ask them to consider participating in this year's Academy. If you have any questions regarding potential recruits, please contact Elaine Witman at elainewitman@yahoo.com or Bonnie Robertson at cordbl@pgcc.edu

So, go to it, and help us make the 2007 Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland ANOTHER smashing success!!!

Alumni Updates

(Cont. from page 3)

generated. We wish you the best Sharon, and hopefully we will see you again in the future!

Rev. Wayne Price (2005), - Rev Price will be a presenter at the upcoming American Society of Victimology's national symposium at the University of Baltimore, and is leading a victim impact panel on April 29th (more information forthcoming).

Rev. Brian Murray (2006), Heather Courtney (2006), Valda Rotolo (2004), and Bob Ertter (2005) - Please help us welcome these four alums as the newest class representatives on the Alumni Executive Board - we are excited to have you on board!

Save the Date

Spring is a VERY busy time for victim service professionals - here are just a handful of the events that are going on around the State:

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. For more information, go to www.nsvrc.org

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. For more information, go to www.preventchildabuse.org

April 22nd- 28th is National Crime Victims Rights Week. For more information, go to www.ovc.gov/ncvrw/welcome.html

May 25th is National Missing Children's Day. For more information, go to www.missingkids.com

American Society of Victimology's Fifth Annual Symposium

April 11th - 13th, 2007

Hosted at the University of Baltimore

If you have not registered, please do so as soon as possible. Remember, all RVAAM Alumni can register at the student rate of only \$50.00! For more information, contact Debra Stanley at dstanley@ubalt.edu or contact ASV at <http://american-society-victimology.org>

RVAAM Alumni Association Cocktail Party Fundraiser at the American Society of Victimology Symposium

April 11th, 2007; 5:00-7:00pm

The RVAAM Alumni Association will be sponsoring its first fundraiser by hosting a cocktail party at ASV's poster session. We are hoping to raise enough money to provide at least one scholarship for this year's upcoming Academy. We are currently looking for volunteers to bartend, set-up, tear-down, and provide coolers of ice to keep the beverages in during the event. If you are interested in lending a helping hand, please contact Debbie Creswell at creswell@harfordsheriff.org

Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office Seventh Annual Crime Victims Fund Run and Walk

Saturday, April 21st, 9:00am at Patterson Park, 2601 East Baltimore Street.

The purpose of this event is to maintain the current emergency funds available to crime victims who need help in covering the cost of victimization and meet the established criteria. The first 400 registered participants will receive a t-shirt. A great post-race party with entertainment, refreshments, and random awards and prizes will be held. For additional information or to register for the fund run and walk, call (410) 396-1897 or log onto www.charmcityrun.com

Howard County's Crime Victims Memorial Service

Sunday, April 22nd; 2:00pm at the Long Reach High School.

Guest speakers will include Mrs. Martin O'Malley and Robin Woolford.

Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services "Kick-off" to Crime Victims Week

Monday, April 23rd; 10:00am at the Maryland Public Safety Education and Training Center, Sykesville, MD.

Maryland Division of Corrections, 7th Annual Prison Tour for Crime Victims

Tuesday, April 24th; 9:00am at the Baltimore Pre-Release Unit for Women, 301 N. Calverton Road, Baltimore MD.

Refreshments and round table discussion will follow the tour. Pre-registration required. For more information, contact Debra Neighoff at dneighoff@dpscs.state.md.us

Roper Victim Assistance Academy 2007

June 4th- 8th

Hosted at the Maryland Public Safety Education & Training Center

For more information, go to <http://rvaam.ubalt.edu>

The 33rd Annual NOVA North American Victim Assistance Conference

July 22nd - 27th, 2007

Grand Sierra Resort, Reno Nevada

For more information, contact NOVA at www.trynova.org

2nd Annual RVAAM Alumni Picnic

Saturday, September 8th; location and time TBA

Mark your calendars now to join us for this family fun-filled event! We are looking for suggestions on locations of parks - one possible location we are thinking of is Quiet Waters Park in Annapolis. If you have some alternate suggestions, send them our way! We would like to host it this year somewhere either east or west of Baltimore. Please email Debbie Creswell with suggestions at creswell@harfordsheriff.org

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 Bonnie (Cord) Robertson, an alumni of the 2005 Academy

My favorite sound is...

Laughter - especially the giggles of little children

My childhood nickname was...

Bonnie - my real name is Barbara

The last book I read was...

Faith in the Valley by Lyanla Vanzant

My favorite time of day is...

Late afternoon/early evening, when the sun is starting to set

The soundtrack that best exemplifies my life...

The Eagles "Hell Freezes Over" - the songs on that album reflect a lot of what I have experienced in life and what I wish for in the future

My greatest accomplishment (so far) has been...

My son, Robert

The perfect day to me would be ...

Having fun with friends and family, and not wanting it to end

I appreciate...

Honesty and Trust

My favorite indulgence is...

Wilbur's Chocolate from Lititz, PA

If I could invite any three people (alive or deceased) to dinner, it would be...

My Dad, Albert Einstein, and George Clooney

Best piece of advice I ever got was...

Choose your battles.

The occupation, other than the one I am currently in, I would want is...

It's a tie - professional house sitter in the Carib-

bean or full-time college professor

The occupation I would most certainly not like to have is...

Martha Stewart's personal assistant when she's having a bad day or Naomi Cambell's assistant ANY day!

The three words that best describe my life are ...

Challenging, blessed, adventurous

My motto or favorite saying is...

"Doing the right thing may not make you popular, but in the end, you will always be able to hold your head up high."

My wildest dream...

To go on a cooking tour around the world

One of my goals for 2007 is...

To enroll at UB to start working on my Master's Degree

Occupational Outlook



The Maryland Commission on Aging is in need of 4 licensed Social Workers. If interested, please contact Rene Alexander at (410) 396-1337.

The Academy Forum is looking for a volunteer to be an Assistant Editor. The responsibilities include contacting RVAAM alumni for information and updates, preparing the 20/20 section of the newsletter each quarter on a different member, and providing current, useful websites to the victim services field. If you are interested, contact Debbie Creswell at creswelld@harfordsheriff.org

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Editorial Board

- Debbie Creswell — Editor**
- Jen Goode — Assistant Editor**
- Bonnie Robertson — Assistant Editor**
- Heather Pfeifer — Art Director/Layout**

Alumni Directory

Please help us keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information has changed, please contact Debbie Creswell via email at creswell@harford.sheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490. We will then publish those changes in the following newsletter.

Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in July 2007