

# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

The Association Newsletter

Issue #55- April 2021

**Just a Thought**

*Conversations around self-care often focus on the individual, but what can be done at an organizational level to support those who are charged with helping others?*

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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.*

**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 during the next few months!*

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**Certification News**

*Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section explains each level of certification, and what are the specific requirements for each.*

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**News From the Field**

*It's important to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. This section highlights what recently passed, or is currently under consideration.*

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**Alumni Showcase**

*Jabrita Shelton shares her thoughts about her time at the Academy, and how it has since influenced her personal and professional development. She is on an amazing journey!*

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## Just a thought...

### Supporting Those Who Serve

*Called to serve.*

*Desire to help those most in need.*

*To make a difference in this world.*

When those who pursue a career in helping trauma victims (e.g., social workers, advocates, therapists, etc.) are asked what led them to pursue the career they have chosen, many offer the reasons listed above. Many also express a deep satisfaction from knowing that the work they do on a daily basis can be instrumental to helping a trauma survivor begin to put his or her life back together.

But what is often minimized or overlooked in this line of work is the toll it can take on the person who is being asked to help. When providing support to women, men, and children who have experienced acute and chronic levels of trauma, front-line helpers are exposed to countless sto-

ries of pain and suffering. This is referred to as 'secondary trauma.' Not surprisingly, this constant exposure can begin to wear the helper down, and may result in their beginning to exhibit some of the same symptoms (or responses) that the trauma victim they are helping is experiencing. This is referred to as a 'secondary traumatic stress response.' These symp-



toms can vary by type (e.g., physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, spiritual), as well as intensity. Some examples of these different symptoms are listed in the table on page 5. Unfortunately, when these symptoms are not acknowledged or not addressed, they often worsen and can begin to have serious repercussions on that helper's per-

sonal and professional life. So, how can this pattern be avoided? One strategy focuses on an individual response. As highlighted in the "Best Practices" essay in this newsletter, in order for any front-line helper to thrive in this field, they need to develop a holistic plan for self-care that is both practical and adaptable so it can meet their changing needs from day-to-day. But there is an equally important second strategy that require a more macro approach to self-care. The creation of a positive work environment. Supervisors need to recognize that secondary trauma is not an 'if' proposition, rather, it is a given. Therefore, if they want their staff to function at their most optimal and minimize the risk of burnout and turnover, leadership must work collaboratively and proactively with staff to create a positive work environment. Here are a few key strategies that can help to minimize the consequences of secondary stress, and reduce the risk of burnout.

\* Keep caseloads at a manageable number

**(Continued on page 5)**

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Happy Fall Y'all!

Well, another summer is behind us, and I am starting to feel the change of season with the temperatures dropping, and seeing the leaves begin to change colors. It's a beautiful time of year - I hope you are able to get outside and enjoy all this season has to offer. It's a great way to refresh your mind, body, and spirit - and you all deserve that!

With another calendar year coming to a close, I want you to think about your career goals for 2022. For those of you who have not yet applied for certification, we would love to help you begin the process so you can show everyone that you are at the top of your game. As you know, this field is constantly changing, so adding these credentials can help you to stand out among your peers. If you would like to learn more information about the certification process, or why you should become a certified victim assistance specialist in Maryland, please sign up for one of the monthly certification information sessions on the RVAAM website ([www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us))

And speaking of RVAAM ... drum roll, please ... we are excited to announce that the Winter Academy will be back IN PERSON at the beautiful Bon Secours Conference Center in Marriottsville, February 14th -18th, 2022 (barring any changes in mandates of course). You can now download the application for the Winter Academy from the RVAAM website ([www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us)), so please start spreading the word by sharing this news with your colleagues, and encouraging them to apply. And remember, if your agency won't pay for it, let them know they can apply for a scholarship. So, make sure to encourage them to submit their

application as soon as possible, seats do fill up fast and we don't want anyone to miss out!

And stay tuned for more advanced training opportunities through V-STEP! Once training topics and dates are selected, we'll share the information via email. So, please make sure we have your correct email address!

Wishing you all the best - I look forward to seeing each of you very soon!

**Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII**

[bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

*Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment. ~ Jim Rohn*



## 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 - Technical Assistance and Training Center: Module 10 - Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

This one hour online training module can help victim service professionals learn about compassion fatigue and its effects, strategies to help maintain healthy boundaries, and tools to develop a personalized self-care plan. To learn more, go to: <https://www.ovctac.gov/saact/mVodule7.cfm>

### Office for Victims of Crime - Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

This comprehensive repository of nearly 500 resources is available to assist victim service professionals and first responder agencies and organizations in raising awareness about and addressing vicarious trauma on individual and organization levels. To learn more, go to: <https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/>

### Melissa Institute

This article provides a framework for how to discuss vicarious trauma, and outlines different individual, social, and organizational interventions. It also includes a list of risk assessment tools to measure vicarious trauma, as well as list of questions for self-assessment. To learn more, go to: [http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/Meichenbaum\\_SelfCare\\_11th-conf.pdf](http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/Meichenbaum_SelfCare_11th-conf.pdf)

### Ted Talks - Self-Care

This compilation of nine videos on the significance of self-care addresses a multitude of resources, including mindfulness, emotional first aid, and gratitude. Each video varies in length from 3-20 minutes. To view these videos, go to: [https://www.ted.com/playlists/299/the\\_importance\\_of\\_self\\_care](https://www.ted.com/playlists/299/the_importance_of_self_care)

**SAVE THE DATE!**



**2022 RVAAM Winter Academy**

**February 14th - 18th, 2022**

Share the news with your colleagues and download a copy of the application from [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) to give them. Any questions, contact Anne Litecky at [alitecky@ubalt.edu](mailto:alitecky@ubalt.edu)

## 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...*

- **Carol Griffin (Class of 2016)** - A huge congratulations are extended to Carol on her recent promotion to Correctional Officer Major with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services on June 30th! What an amazing accomplishment. We are so so proud of you!
- **Brittany Lore (Class of 2017)** - Wow, wow, wow! Brittany was recently promoted to Deputy Director of Maryland's Address Confidentiality Program. The program was recently expanded to include threatened individuals, allowing anyone who fears for their safety to qualify for address confidentiality, regardless of their relationship to the perpetrator. And if that news isn't big enough, Brittany also had a baby a few months ago! Congratulations Brittany on your amazing accomplishment and milestone.
- **Amanda Millir (Class of 2021, Winter)** - Amanda has been very busy since graduating from the Academy and is making huge waves in the field. This October, she is going to be a guest on a podcast called the Grey Zone, along with the prosecutor who convicted her abuser back in

2012. The two will be discuss Amanda's case, and Amanda will share other parts of her story and discuss some of the work she is involved in. Then, a Peabody Award-winning director from the United Kingdom will be coming stateside to film Amanda, along with other victims and survivors, for a documentary film that will be shown in the U.K. to raise awareness and educate people about the intricate details of intimate partner violence, and the complex issues many victims and survivors face. Amanda is hoping to build off



of this experience to begin working with abusers to help them address the issues that led them to engage in abusive behaviors, while still providing support and safety planning to victims. What an incredible path you are pursuing- Amanda - we are so excited to see where this journey leads.

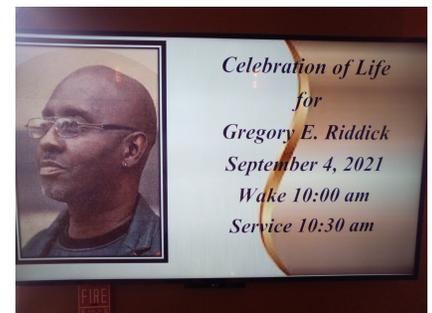
- **Teresa Peek (Class of 2019, Winter)** - Teresa will be taking quite the bite out of the Big Apple this fall. She has been selected as one of the models for New York fashion week. Holy Glamorama, this is too exciting!! Congratulations Teresa - have a blast rocking the runway!
- **Rebecca Smith (Class of 2018)** - Rebecca is expecting a very special delivery before the end of the year. In early November, she will be welcoming a baby boy. Congratulations Rebecca, we know this little boy is going to bring so much joy, and you're going to be a great Mom.
- **Robin Washington (Class of 2017)** - Robin is a gifted poet and had the opportunity to present two of her poems at the Life Journey's Writer's

Guild on October 2nd. The Life Journey's Writers Club seeks to use literary arts as an empowerment tool to help disenfranchised and underserved families, men, women, and youth engage in a creative process that incorporates academic, self-esteem, personal/social tolerance and communication skill building. What a great honor Robin - you are sharing another of your amazing gifts with the world.

- **Suzie Boisclair (Class of 2012) and Theresa Heigl (Class of 2007)** - Suzie and Theresa were recently interviewed by the Frederick News Post about the impact the COVID pandemic has had on domestic violence incidents and severity that has been reported in recent months. They noted some very interesting trends, and explore some possible reasons behind the patterns. To read the article, you can find it at: [https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/crime\\_and\\_justice/frederick-county-sees-increased-severity-in-domestic-violence-cases-during-pandemic/article\\_5f10105e-7a39-5bf5-9116-2ab7c72a5f72.html](https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/crime_and_justice/frederick-county-sees-increased-severity-in-domestic-violence-cases-during-pandemic/article_5f10105e-7a39-5bf5-9116-2ab7c72a5f72.html)

## IN MEMORIAM

**Gregory Riddick (July 9, 1961 - August 22, 2021)**



On August 22nd, the RVAAM family lost a beloved member, Gregory Riddick (Class of 2019, Winter). Greg was born in North Carolina, but later moved to Baltimore MD. A creative

soul, Greg was a talented poet and his writings inspired the founding of Raw Spirit Publications. Sadly, in 2016, Gregory experienced the most tragic loss of his lifetime, losing his son, “Trill,” to gun violence. Wanting to find a way to honor his son’s legacy and help end youth violence, Greg devoted the next few years creating and overseeing the Trill Foundation and Top Notch Ministries. Both organizations focus on promoting healing through a holistic and collaborative approach through trauma informed care, grief counseling, work force development and peer support to youth and their families.

In addition to the time he spent leading these organizations, Greg also gave of his time by serving on numerous boards, teams, and committees comprised of groups of compassionate people who are as intentional in their work and deeds as he was. He also volunteered at Roberta’s House, where he led a grief support group, and continued his education and professional development so he could better serve the community. Most recently, he became a state certified Victim Assistance Specialist through the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland, and a CCAR-T Recovery Academy Trainer.

Gregory’s selfless advocacy was evident through the many endeavors he chose to lend his time, energy, and talents to. As a result, he was a beloved and trusted colleague and friend to many in the field of victim services.

Greg is survived by his son Brandon Riddick and his two grandchildren Morgan Riddick (8) and Brandon Riddick Jr. (6). His three sisters Tammy Radford, Pamela Riddick and Monique Chensworth, his maternal aunt Ender Vashti Malloy, maternal uncle Knox Delano Allen; nieces, nephews and a host of other relatives, colleagues and friends.

## CERTIFICATION NEWS

*Why aren't you certified in victim services yet? When you pick a doctor or a lawyer to work with you, you almost always certainly base your decision on their credentials, such as the school they've attended and the cases they have worked on. After all, you want to make sure that you choose someone who knows what they are talking about and who has the most experience in the appropriate domain. The same applies to victim services - the right certification not only helps you to bolster your knowledge and skills that you can use when working with victims, but also provides quantifiable evidence of your competence in this challenging and competitive field. So, what are you waiting for? Go to [www.rvaam.us](http://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 (VAS-I)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) interview; e) \$50 application processing fee

**\* Level II (VAS-II)** - 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 Vic-

tim Services training); d) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; e) \$75 application processing fee.

**\* Level III (VAS-III)** - 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 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 Victim Services Ethics training; b) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; 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 Victim Services Ethics training; b) oral presentation on approved topic in victim assistance; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.



All application materials are available online at [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming classes on ethics. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

## Just a Thought (Continued)

- \* Ensure staff take breaks during the day (e.g., between clients, real lunch break)
- \* Develop a debriefing plan for both individual and group sessions
- \* Support opportunities for professional development (i.e., training, continuing education)
- \* Organize and facilitate team-building exercises (i.e., semi-annual retreats, community events)
- \* Recognize staff for job well-done (i.e., monthly celebrations)
- \* Encourage staff to take mental health/personal days of leave when necessary
- \* Create safe spaces or trauma-informed spaces where staff can go to decompress
- \* Develop and prepare a crisis plan and a set of common-problem solutions.

It is important to understand and normalize that all frontline helpers who work with trauma survivors will, to some degree, be affected by secondary trauma. However, the impact this exposure has can be greatly mitigated if it is recognized and addressed by the organization's leadership. When staff feel valued, respected, and supported in their work, they are more likely to successfully navigate the

Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	
Diminished concentration Confusion Spaciness Loss of meaning Decreased self-esteem Preoccupation with trauma Trauma imagery Apathy Rigidity Disorientation Whirling thoughts Thoughts of self-harm or harming others Self-doubt Perfectionism Minimization	Powerlessness Anxiety Guilt Anger/rage Survivor guilt Shutdown Numbness Fear Helplessness Sadness Depression Hypersensitivity Emotional roller coaster Overwhelmed Depleted	Clingy Impatient Irritable Withdrawn Moody Regression Sleep disturbances Appetite changes Nightmares Hypervigilance Elevated startle response Use of negative coping (smoking, alcohol or other substance abuse) Accident proneness Losing things Self-harm behaviors	
Spiritual	Interpersonal	Physical	
Questioning the meaning of life Loss of purpose Lack of self-satisfaction Pervasive hopelessness Ennui Anger at God Questioning of prior religious beliefs	Withdrawn Decreased interest in intimacy or sex Mistrust Isolation from friends Impact on parenting (protectiveness, concern about aggression) Projection of anger or blame Intolerance Loneliness	Shock Sweating Rapid heartbeat Breathing difficulties Aches and pains Dizziness Impaired immune system	
Impact on Professional Functioning			
Performance of Job Tasks	Morale	Interpersonal	Behavioral
Decrease in quality Decrease in quantity Low motivation Avoidance of job tasks Increase in mistakes Setting perfectionist standards Obsession about details	Decrease in confidence Loss of interest Dissatisfaction Negative attitude Apathy Demoralization Lack of appreciation Detachment Feelings of incompleteness	Withdrawal from colleagues Impatience Decrease in quality of relationship Poor communication Subsume own needs Staff conflicts	Absenteeism Exhaustion Faulty judgment Irritability Tardiness Irresponsibility Overwork Frequent job changes

Source: Figley 1995.

stressors associated with their work, and in turn, be more effective in their roles as a helper. Thus, to effectively serve those who have experienced trauma, organizations must continuously seek out ways to help those who are responsible for helping others.

*Essay contributed by Stephanie Ryan, LPC*

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

*It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or policies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!*

**SB 484 - Criminal Procedure - Victims of Crime - Private Room** - This bill ensures that victims are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity throughout the investigation process by requiring that victims be notified that they may request a private room when reporting a crime (other than homicide). The State Board of Victim Services is charged with creating a poster to notify victims of this right, and law enforcement agencies will be required to display it and adhere to victim's request when made. This bill went into effect October 1, 2021.

**SB 43 - Criminal Law - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Sexual Activity** - This bill prohibits a law enforcement officer from engaging in certain sexual acts/sexual contact with a

person who is a victim, witness, or suspect in an open investigation that the officer is conducting, supervising, or assisting with if the officer knew or should have known that the person is a victim, witness, or suspect; or, is requesting assistance from or responding to the law enforcement officer in the course of the officer's official duties; or is in the custody of the officer. Certain exceptions are noted. This bill went into effect May 18, 2021.

**SB 327 - Civil Actions - Financial Exploitation of Susceptible Adults and Older Adults** - This bill, referred to as the Maryland SAFE Act, authorizes the Attorney General's Office to take certain actions, including filing suit, on behalf of susceptible adults and older adults, and creates a new civil cause of action for susceptible or older adults, or their authorized

representative to recover money lost through financial exploitation in Court. The bill went into effect October 1, 2020.

**SB 109 - Secretary of State - Address Confidentiality Programs - Merger of Programs and Expanded Participant Eligibility** - This bill merges the Address Confidentiality Program for domestic violence victims and the Human Trafficking Address Confidentiality Program for victims of human trafficking into a single program to be administered by the Secretary of State. Program eligibility is expanded to include survivors of threatened, attempted, or actual domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, harassment, or human trafficking; and, may include individuals who reside in the same household as an eligible applicant or program participant. The bill also amends the conditions by which the Secretary of State may cancel the participation of a program participant. The bill went into effect October 1, 2021.



**SB 220 - Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Protected Groups and Penalties** - This bill amends the term “sexual orientation” in the context of hate crimes to include gender identity in the list of characteristics on the basis of which a person may not commit certain acts. It also authorizes the court to require an offender convicted of hate crimes to complete an anti bias education program in addition to any other penalties imposed. The University System of Maryland has been charged with the management of the development of an anti bias education program by January 1, 2023. The bill went into effect May 30, 2021.

**HB 548 - Human Services - Trauma-Informed Care - Commission and Training** - This bill, referred to as Healing Maryland’s Trauma Act, es-

establishes the Commission on Trauma-Informed Care to coordinate a statewide initiative to prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of State services that impact children, youth, families, and older adults. The Commission is required to submit its findings annually to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 30th, and is required to study developing a process and framework for implementing an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Aware Program in the State. The bill went into effect July 1, 2021.

**SB 494 - Juveniles Convicted as Adults - Sentencing - Limitations and Reductions (Juvenile Restoration Act)** - This bill authorizes a court, when sentencing a minor convicted as an adult, to impose a sentence less than a certain minimum term; prohibits a court from imposing a sentence of life without the possibility of parole or release for a minor; and authorizes an individual convicted as an adult for an offense committed as a minor to file a motion to reduce the duration of the sentence. The bill requires a court to conduct a hearing on a motion to reduce said sentence, and to provide notice of the hearing to be given to the victim or the victim’s representative. The bill went into effect April 10, 2021.

## Best Practices

### The Importance of Self-Care

Who doesn’t love a good face mask, a vacation, and a pint of Ben and Jerry’s? We all do, but that’s only a small portion of the self-care we could be doing. Self-care, is in fact, a practice. It requires a holistic approach - one that

addresses *all* elements of our well-being and goes beyond making us feel good in the moment and includes strategies that promote our long-term health and well-being. What this looks like for each individual will vary because everyone’s needs are unique, and it also requires we be flexible because our individual circumstances and needs may change day to day. So, we need to move away from a notion that there is a one-size-fits-all approach to self-care. It is personal. What is most important, however, is that we are consistent in our practice.

Here are a few things to consider when putting together your own personal self-care practice:

#### Healthy + fulfilling relationships

Humans are wired for belonging and connection. Therefore, relationships are an essential part of our lives and even a form of caring for ourselves. Spending time with the people in our lives who are important to us is so important. These relationships bring excitement and value to our lives. An example of prioritizing this form of self-care is setting up a coffee date with a long-time friend, or surprising your partner with a date night! In cherishing and valuing your relationships with others, you allow for opportunities to enhance connection and create the safe space for vulnerability.

#### Setting boundaries

Setting boundaries within relationships is essential for maintaining the health and longevity of those relationships. Healthy boundaries keep us safe. This can look like telling a friend, “No, I am not available this weekend.” In acknowledging that you are not available, you are setting a boundary (e.g., not overextending yourself) and you do not need to offer an explanation if you don’t want to. No is a complete sentence. Healthy boundaries set the tone for expectations in relationships and serve as a guide to others about how much we value our-

selves. Those that care for us and respect us will adhere to the boundaries we set in place, and will not intentionally violate them.

**Routines**

Incorporating routines into your life can be instrumental for validating progress and task completion, and reinforcing a sense of purpose. The sense of accomplishment can take you a long way, especially on a difficult day.

**Physical health**

When is the last time you’ve checked in on your physical health? Physical health can be defined in terms of getting enough sleep, being physically active, and giving your body the proper nutrients it needs. The body responds to the level of treatment and care it receives, and most of the time our bodies have a way of telling us that something is wrong if we don’t make it a priority. The kindness you treat your body with matters. If you love your body, it will take care of you.

**Stimulating the mind**

This can include self-compassion, meditation, affirmations, acknowledging gratitude and/or some other form of intellectual stimulation. Mindfulness encourages us to slow down and become one with the present moment. We are unnaturally so resistant to slowing down, but when we do, it can save us from acting out irrationally, and it supports clarity in daily functioning. So, throughout the day, remind yourself it’s good to embrace the pause.

**Treating yourself and taking time to rejuvenate**

This is the exciting realm of self-care that allows yourself to fulfill desires that are special and not something part of your daily routine. This could mean going out for a special dinner with your partner, taking a long bubble

bath or hot shower, or curling up on the couch and binge watching your favorite show on a Saturday. While each of these are perceived as ‘treats,’ they are an important part of our self-care practice because it allows us an opportunity to explore and learn ourselves in new ways.



All components of self-care are important and we have a choice every day to prioritize our own wellness. It is up to you to love yourself in this way, even on hard days. Caring for yourself is not only a gift to yourself, but it is a gift to others as well because it is only when we are feeling our best that we can be our best.

*Essay contributed by Taylor Shiver, MA, LGPC, NCC*

**Alumni Showcase**

***My Journey with the Roper Victim Assistance Academy***

I attended the Roper Victim Assistance Academy in 2017. At that time, I was looking to gain resources for the population of women I was serving in my nonprofit organization. However, since completing the Academy, my knowledge and understanding of how I may serve different communities through trauma-informed practices has only continued to evolve.

The best part of my Roper experience (aside from meeting so many new col-

leagues who shared similar goals and experiences, and the beautiful setting of Bon Secour) was the different breakthrough and “aha” moments I had throughout the week. I was able to use those experiences to formulate a set of strategies I could take back and implement in my community. In short, my time at the Roper Academy planted so many seeds, personally and professionally, and has served as the catalyst to further my professional development in trauma-informed practices.

Since completing the Academy, I have continued my journey by expanding my knowledge and skills on trauma-informed care. Over the past four years, I have completed certificates in Family & Relationship Trauma, Suicide Prevention, Sexual Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Grief Bereavement, and am now a Certified Trauma-Informed Care Professional.

Most recently, I have launched a new venture called Mind Your MADNESS, to help women address the unresolved traumas (current and past) that many are carrying around and has been disrupting their lives in various ways. The program is designed to provide added support and guide women through a 7-step process that teaches them how to heal organically through past and present trauma using mindfulness. I’ve been fortunate to be featured on several nationally syndicated podcasts, as well as invited to speak at several events, to share my life-story and talk about the program. The interest it has received is amazing, and I am so happy that I have been able to help raise awareness about trauma in our communities and to educate others on how they can effectively minimize the stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms that so many have come to normalize with their trauma. To help reach an even larger audience, I will be launching a new podcast,

Mind Your Madness, on October 18th, to further the conversation around trauma and how we can navigate the healing process. If you would like to learn more about the program, or to sign up for one of my upcoming events, please go to <https://mindy-ourmadnessexperience.com/>

I am so excited to continue to build safe spaces for women that include collaborations with other professionals. So, if you would be interested in joining me on my podcast as a guest, please email me at [admin@mindy-ourmadnessexperience.com](mailto:admin@mindy-ourmadnessexperience.com). And keep your eyes open for an announcement on the website for a Healing Retreat I will be sponsoring and facilitating this upcoming March!

I am so grateful for my experiences with RVAAM. So, with recruitment underway for the next Academy, I know if anyone asks for my advice on whether to attend the Academy, I will respond with a resounding "Yes!" And I will share with them that the benefits that await them are more than they can imagine - both personally and professionally. All they have to do is sign up, and then go with an open heart, spirit, and mind. We're all on a unique journey - RVAAM is one of the stops along that path that can bring countless blessings.

*Essay contributed by Jabrita R. Shelton (Class of 2017).*



## A Warm Welcome to our Newest RVAAM Alumni!

### *Congratulations to our newest members of the Alumni Association - the Graduates of Summer Class 2021!*

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Shannice Anderson         | Mary Arriola         |
| Gary Brown, Jr.           | Tommie Carmichael    |
| Jessica Clark             | Rhonda Cole          |
| Windy Davis               | Elaina De La Cruz    |
| Shirdina Dedmon           | Jessica Foster       |
| Nikki Garnes              | Karen Greene         |
| Tara Hargrove             | Hamil Harris         |
| Skyla Hullihen.           | William Kellibrew IV |
| Penelope Kwarikunda       |                      |
| Jeannine LeMieux          | Mark Mason           |
| Timothy McEniry-Roschke   |                      |
| Marilyn Myers             | Akira Owens          |
| Corenthia Patterson-Adams |                      |
| Phyllis Pinckney          | Tanya Richardson     |
| Wendy Schoonmaker.        | Debra Thomas         |
| Karen Thornton            | Robert Washington    |
| Iyanna Williams           |                      |

## 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](mailto: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!

## Editorial Board

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- Jordan Alpart - Contributor**
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**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in January 2022**