

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #4 - October 2006

Just a Thought

The second part of a two-part series, David Wolinski provides some practical advice on how to utilize the sex offender registry when developing a personal safety plan.

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Just a thought...

Sex Offender Notification - What's Next?

David Wolinski

It's getting tough to be a sex offender these days. For more than a decade federal and state legislation across the nation has placed tighter restrictions on convicted sex offenders. Information regarding sex offenders, which was once kept confidential, is now available to victims, caregivers, advocates for victims, and anyone who is concerned about sexual victimization. I frequently meet people who ask me why the problem of sexual abuse has grown so much in the last few years. It is not so much that the problem has grown; it is just that we are now publicly confronting an issue that has always been there. Anyone with access to a computer, a telephone, or who can write a letter can find out who the convicted sex offenders are and where they live. Now that information about sex offenders is so readily available, the next logical question is, "what's next?"



It is easy to see how people can quickly become overwhelmed by the knowledge that sex offenders are living in their neighborhoods, working in the next office, and are the parents of children in the local school. Without an understanding of sexual offenses and the way sex offenders operate it is no wonder that some people would rather know who the offenders are. For some people life is easier when sex offenders remain anonymous. After all, what can you do about it?

Using the Sex Offender Registry as a Part of Your Personal Safety Plan

When using the registry as a part of your personal safety plan keep a balanced perspective. Simply because a registered offender lives in your neighborhood does not necessarily mean

that this individual is a serious threat. Most registered offenders committed their offense with someone that he or she knew prior to the offense. In the case of child sex offenders, a prior relationship existed in more than 90% of the cases. On the other hand, the lack of any known offenders living in your neighborhood does not mean that there is no risk. Many sex offenders have never been caught or convicted and traveling to other neighborhoods, cities or even states is not too far for some offenders.

The easiest way to take advantage of the sex offender notification services provided by the Sex Offender Registry is to visit the Sex Offender Compliance and Enforcement in Maryland website at www.socem.info. This website provides quick access to a zip code search and our newest feature, an interactive mapping tool that allows users to quickly survey the state for the residences of registered offenses. The mapping utility, developed by the Towson University Center for Geographic Information Sciences, also identifies other important features such as schools, churches, and recreational areas. The SOCEM Registry linked to this webpage also provides quick access to the list of offenders who are currently not in compliance with registration laws and may be wanted by a local law enforcement agency. Users can provide feedback about these offenders that will be forwarded

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello Alumni!

Can you believe the summer is over? And what a busy one it was!! Hopefully as the weather gets a little cooler, things will quiet down some. I know everyone has been working really hard.

On August 12th we had a chance for a little fun. The 1st Annual Alumni picnic was held in Laurel, Maryland. It was such a great time for all! There were games, a little competition, and plenty of food :) And of course, there was a great spirit of camaraderie as everyone caught up with each others' lives and met each other's families. I would like to extend a special thank you to all who participated. I am looking forward to next year and hope to see even more of you there.

Just a little reminder, as the Academy Forum is intended to help keep all of the RVAAM Alumni connected, we encourage you to help us to keep everyone informed of important issues, legislative or policy changes, and new resources you come across in your community. We would also love to just hear about what you are up to!

We look forward to hearing from you, and 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!

www.bwjp.org - The Battered Women's Justice Project offers training, technical assistance, and consultation on the most promising practices of the criminal justice system in addressing domestic violence.

www.dvinstitute.org - The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community strives to provide an interdisciplinary vehicle and forum by which scholars, practitioners, and observers of family violence in the African American community will have the continual opportunity to articulate their perspectives on family violence through research findings, the examination of service delivery and intervention mechanisms, and the identification of appropriate and effective responses to prevent/reduce family violence in the African American community

www.ncadv.org - The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence is to organize for collective power by advancing transformative work, thinking and leadership of communities and individuals working to end the violence in our lives.

www.stopitnow.org/downloads/Prevent_CS_A.pdf - Here is an excellent little handbook on sex offenders and tips to develop a family safety action plan. Contains checklists specific to child sexual abuse information.

www.csom.org - Established in June 1997, the Center for Sex Offender Management's (CSOM) goal is to enhance public safety by preventing further victimization through improving the management of adult and juvenile sex offenders who are in the community. The Center for Sex Offender Management is sponsored by the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections, State Justice Institute, and the American Probation and Parole Association. CSOM is administered through a cooperative agreement between OJP and the Center for Effective Public Policy.

News From the Field

Everyone knows that the field of victims services is always evolving. The challenge is to find a way to keep on top of all the changes ... we're here to help!

Here's an overview of just some of the most recent legislative changes:

Opening of Harford County Family Justice Center

The Harford County Family Justice Center, the first of its kind in Maryland, officially opened with a ceremony in Bel Air on August 10, 2006. Based on the national model developed in San Diego, it will serve as a one-stop center for victims of sexual, physical and domestic abuse. The Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence



Unit, the State's Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Unit, the Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC) and the Child Advocacy

Center worked together to develop the Center.

The Center is located on 23 N. Main Street in Bel Air, and is open 8:30am to 6:00pm, Mondays through Fridays, with help on-call for emergencies at night and on weekends. The phone number is (410) 638-3113.

Save the Date

Despite the summer temperatures finally cooling down and fall quickly approaching, there is no slowing down in the number of activities and trainings available for victim service providers. October 2006 marks the 20th Annual Commemoration of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Here are just a sampling of events that are going on in your communities during the next few months!

Domestic Violence Awareness Month Calendar:

MNADV Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner - Thursday, October 26, 2006; 5:30pm; Sheraton Columbia Hotel, Columbia, MD.

Registration fee - \$50 per person (\$60 after October 13). For more information, contact MNADV at (301) 352-4574.

Anne Arundel County - Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Awareness Night - Monday, October 16, 2006; 6:30pm, location TBA. Sponsored by the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. For more information, contact YWCA at (410) 626-7800.

Anne Arundel County - Empty Place at the Table Exhibit - Monday, October 16 through Friday, October 20, 2006; 6:30pm, location TBA. Sponsored by the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. For more information, contact YWCA at (410) 626-7800.

Baltimore County - Fifth Annual Candlelight Vigil - Monday, October 9, 2006: 7:00-8:00pm, Heritage Park Pavilion, Dundalk, MD. Sponsored by the Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County. For more information, contact Sandi Kaufman at (410) 285-4357.

Baltimore County - Domestic Violence Awareness Poetry Event - Thursday, October 26, 2006; Doors open at 6:00pm, show begins at 6:30pm. The Creative Alliance at the Patterson Theatre, 3134 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore, MD. \$5 suggested donation. Sponsored by TurnAround. For more information, contact Mothyna James-Brightful at (410) 837-7000 or at mjames@turnaroundinc.org

Frederick County - Immigration: Looking Past the Papers. Friday, October 20, 2006; 8:00am - 3:30pm. Hood College, 401 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, MD. A one-day conference focusing on the intersection of domestic violence and diverse cultures. Free. Sponsored by the Frederick County Domestic Violence and Hood College. For more information, contact Pat Campbell at (301) 662-8800.

Harford County - Harford Mall Expo Display. Friday, October 20 - Saturday, October 21, 2006. Harford Mall, Bel Air, MD. Sponsored by the Harford County Chamber of Commerce and Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC). For more information, contact SARC Outreach at (410) 836-8431.

Harford County - Candlelight Vigil. Monday, October 23, 2006; 6:00pm. In front of Circuit Court, Main Street, Bel Air, MD. Sponsored by the Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC). For more information, contact SARC Outreach at (410) 836-8431.

Howard County - "Celebrate Hope" Gala 2006. Saturday, October 14, 2006; 6:00-11:00pm. The Kossiakoff Center. \$150 per ticket, all levels of sponsorship available. Sponsored by Domestic Violence Center of Howard County and Kaiser Permanente. For more information, contact Kelly Wardenfelt at (410) 997-0304 or at kwardfelt@dvcenter.org

Prince George's County - "The Freedom Journey" Domestic Violence Awareness Day. Saturday, October 14, 2006; 11:00am - 3:00pm. Suitland Community Center, Suitland, MD. Sponsored by the Lords House of Glory. For more information, contact (301) 654-2690 ext. 315.

Prince George's County - Sharing Our Stories: A Survivor's Forum. Tuesday, October 17, 2006; 6:30 - 8:30pm. Rennie Forum, Prince George's Community College, 301 Largo Road, Largo, MD. Free. Sponsored by the Office of the Sheriff, Prince George's County and the Prince George's County Coordinating

Council. For more information, contact Tiffany Williams at (301) 883-7050 or Tina Francis at (301) 883-3630.

Prince George's County - Empty Place at the Table Exhibit. Friday, October 20 - November 3, 2006; Open daily, 8:30am - 4:30pm. County Administration Building, First Floor, Upper Marlboro, MD. Free. Sponsored by the Office of the Sheriff, Prince George's County. For more information, contact Tiffany Williams at (301) 883-7050 or Tina Francis at (301) 883-3630.

"Changing Culture, Involving Men, Engaging Communities" - 2006 Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Conference. Friday, November 3, 2006; 8:00am - 4:30pm. Marriott Baltimore/Washington International Airport Hotel. \$145 per person. Social Work CEU's available. Sponsored by Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault. For more information, contact (301) 352-4574 or email at info@mnadv.org.

The 2nd Bi-annual National Crisis Response Conference. November 10 - 13, 2006; Wyndham Riverfront Hotel, North Little Rock, Arkansas. \$150 fee, includes six meals. For more information, contact <http://www.ovcttac.org>

Identity Theft: Victims' Need for Recovery of Their Good Name and Their Good Credit. December 5th - 6th, 2006. Austin, Texas. Sponsored by Office for Victims of Crime. For more information, contact <http://www.ovcttac.org>

REMEMBER! OVC Professional Development Scholarships are available! Scholarships provide up to \$1,000 for individuals and up to \$5,000 for multi-disciplinary teams of victim service professionals seeking continuing education opportunities. To determine whether you or your team is eligible for a scholarship, visit the OVC Training Calendar at <http://www.ovcttac.org/calendar/training.cfm>

Hot Topics

"Credentialing: What You Should Know"

By Debbie Creswell

As the field of victim services evolves, practitioners and programs need to advance and enhance their roles in the delivery of services for victims of crime. With such increased responsibility comes the need to define and adopt basic guidelines for provision of services. There is need for on-going professional development to keep informed of trends and changes in the field and to forge a common

ground in providing victim services. In addition, there is a need to acknowledge the unique contributions of government, non-profit, and private providers to bridge service gaps to form coordinated responses to victimization (DeHart, 2003).

Credentialing would set standards for service, provide continuing education, recognize years of service and experience, define our profession and lend credibility to what we do, no matter where we do it or to whom we provide services. It is a win-win situation, especially for the recipients of the services - the crime victims themselves.

Several states have implemented a credentialing program, including but not limited to: Ohio, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, California, Kentucky, Colorado, and Pennsylvania, as well as credentialing at the national level through NACP. Ohio has been credentialing victim service providers for 12 years, with approximately 800 victim service providers registered at this time (personal communication, Jeanette Adkins, August 2006).

Kentucky certifies their domestic violence advocates in order to "provide a method to assure clients, the community, and other members of the D.V. profession, that D.V. program staff have successfully completed training and supervised work experience which is necessary to provide non-judgmental, empowering intervention for victims of D.V. and their children. And to provide a mechanism to recognize the competency of skilled D.V. advocates who have acquired those skills through a combination of work and life experience, training, and traditional academic preparation" (Holmes & Overbee, 2003). Similarly, Colorado established a voluntary victim advocate certification program to "encourage and recognize those that have achieved years of experience and training, while honoring the service and training of part-time and volunteer advocates" (Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance). North Carolina designed a certification program to "unite all persons in North Carolina who currently have experience in assisting crime victims. Though many are seasoned in providing services to crime victims, the certification program aims to set a uniformed standard for training professionals in crime victim services in North Carolina" (North Carolina Victim Assistance Network, 2003). Finally, Pennsylvania certifies its advocates to "acknowledge an individual's commitment to education, experience, and ethical conduct in basic victim assistance" (Coalition of Pennsylvania Crime Victim Organization, 2005).

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Just a thought...

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to the registry staff. This information is evaluated and sent to the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or the offender's parole or probation agent.

In addition to allowing users to search for sex offenders, the SOCEM website provides information about two services that will automatically send notifications to individuals by telephone. The Wireless Amber Alert allows a user to receive free Amber Alert text messages. Amber Alerts are issued when a child has been abducted, providing timely information to the public regarding the missing child and any possible suspects. By registering on the Sex Offender Alert Line at 1-866-559-8017 a user can register to receive messages on any telephone when a sex offender moves into specified zip codes. Registered users know within 48 hours that a registered sex offender has established residence within their neighborhood or any area of interest.

Conclusion

So, in response to the the question, "what's next?" my response is this - take the time to educate yourself about sex offenders in general. Then use these information resources to identify specific individuals that you may encounter in your community. The registry is a screening tool to help identify potential problems and reduce the risk of sexual assault. Include the registry as part of your personal safety plan, but keep a balanced perspective. Remember, sex offenders have always lived and worked in our communities, but now we have a right to know who they are.

David Wolinski is the Assistant Director of Criminal Justice Information Systems in the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. He is a retired police lieutenant from Baltimore County and has been working with the registration and management of sex offenders for eleven years.

Hot Topics

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The overarching principle that unites all victim service providers is to provide victims with the best possible services and to do them no further harm. By establishing a credentialing program in Maryland, we will be able to enhance the skills of victim service providers that will enable them to better serve victims of crime and provide both victims and the community with the confidence that victim service providers are qualified and competent professionals. In addition, such a program will provide victim service providers with appropriate and tangible recognition for the specialized work they perform, for the level of training that is required to do their job effectively. Furthermore, such a program will allow for growth and advancement for victim service providers, and to ensure that such credentialing criteria are established by those in the field rather than by others.

Even though we may each come from different specializations within the field of victim services, I strongly believe we are united in one common goal - to best serve Maryland's crime victims. Therefore, I encourage each of you to become an active participant in helping to develop a credentialing model that will best fit the needs of our field as a whole, as well as our individual specialization. But most importantly, to develop a model that will help us provide the best possible care and services for victims of crime.

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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...

Beverly Brooks (2004) - This summer Beverly moved to Arizona and accepted a position with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department in Phoenix. As a result, resigned from her position as the Vice-President of RVAAM Alumni Association. If you would like to thank Beverly for her service to the Association you can reach her at: 825 West Osborn Road, Apartment 4026, Phoenix, AZ 85013; or you can email her at be_brooks@yahoo.com Best of luck Beverly, you will be missed!

Karen Crawley-Buckholtz (2005) - Karen was recently promoted to Case Management Supervisor with the Department of Juvenile Justice and now supervises the Glen Burnie office. In addition, she has opened a private counseling practice in Odenton, Maryland. Congrats Karen, and keep up the good work!

Kathy Coursey (2004) - Kathy has a new last name, Kathy Masterson. Please make a note of it in your address books!

Deidre Gardner (2006) - Diedre is now a therapist in training at the Family Bereavement Center, and is now working with her fellow classmate (and 2006 presenter), Kim Holmes.

Eileen Katrick (2005) - Please keep Eileen in your thoughts and prayers, as she recently suffered the loss of her beloved husband. We're here for you Eileen!

Cherie Peay (2004) - Cherie was recently promoted to Correctional Officer Major and has been assigned to serve as the Central Transportation Unit Commander. Congrats Cherie!

Nicole Quinn (2006) - Nicole recently got a new job. She is now the Program Manager of Calvert County Family Center, with Catholic Community Services. Nicole is now working 9-5 and is happy not be working 24/7. We wish you the best Nicole!

Rosemary Raiman (2004) - Rosemary and her wonderful husband just celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary this past August! Congratulations to you both!

Marvin Robinson (2005) - Marvin was recently promoted to Deputy Sheriff Corporal for Prince George's County. He was also transferred to the School Resource Officer program at High Point High School. Congrats Marvin, we're sure the kids are going to love you!

Valda Rotolo (2004) - Valda wanted to let everyone know how proud she is of her son, Cody Cailidonis. Cody just received his Associates Degree in General Studies from the Cecil Community College. He is also featured in a Barbizon advertisement on page 3 of the online magazine. Handsome and smart, great combination Valda!

Lauren Summers (2006) - Lauren has recently changed jobs. Just this past month, she started working at the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office in the Felony Violence Division. Best of luck Lauren!

Dave Thomas (Academy Faculty, Trainer) - Debra Snow, M.A., Director of Trauma Resources at Sidran Institute (and a 2004 alum) wanted to extend her thanks to Dave for all the work he does for her staff. Dave provides training on domestic violence for the staff and volunteers. Debra says Dave is one of the best trainers she has ever had. We echo that sentiment!!!!

Kim Vasco (2004) - Kim has taken a new position within the Howard County State's Attorney's Office, and is now the Victim Sup-

port Liaison in the Howard County's Child Advocacy Center. Congrats Kim!

Elaine Whitman (Academy Faculty) - Please keep Elaine in your thoughts and prayers, as she recently suffered the loss of her father. We send you a huge hug Elaine!

Happy Birthday!

Help us make sure we wish everyone who is celebrating a birthday, a very happy day ... if we have overlooked anyone, please shoot us an email and we'll add them to our birthday list!

Nona Williams (2006) - August 27 (happy belated!)

Lauren Summers (2006) - September 26 (happy belated!)

Marvin Robinson (2005) - October 13

Theresa Martin (2006) - October 27 ... 50 Years Young!!!!

Robin Ballard (2006) - October 30

Occupational Outlook



Hear about an upcoming job vacancy in your agency or somewhere else? Share it with the alums! You never know who may be interested in switching jobs or looking to relocate somewhere new ... you know the adage, "sometimes it's just being in the right place at the right time."

Full-Time Bilingual Domestic Violence Victim Advocate - Office of the Sheriff, Domestic Violence Intake & Advocacy Office, Hyattsville Courthouse.

Description - Advocate will assist clients directly after obtaining protective orders and to assist with victim services information and connections. Advocate may also be contacted to assist client with the initial protective order application.

The position is a Violence Against Women STOP grant funded position ending on September 30, 2006, with reapplication beginning on October 1, 2006. Absorption of position into

the Agency budget is expected in the third year. Full-time salary = \$35,000 - \$36,750.

Requirements - Applicant should have experience in domestic violence issues; Bachelor's degree in related area preferred.

Interested applicants should submit a letter of intent and their resume to: Norma Harley, Manager, Domestic Violence Intervention/Community Services and Victim Advocate Unit, Office of the Sheriff, 1601 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20773. You can also call Norma at (301) 883-7083 or email her at njharley@co.pg.md.us

Community Developer I/II - Office of the Sheriff, Domestic Violence Intervention/Community Services and Victim Advocate Unit

The Office of the Sheriff is currently accepting applications to fill a vacant Community Developer I/II position, Grade 18/21. This is an entry-level professional community liaison/development/advocacy work in which the candidate works independently to coordinate community events to educate the public (e.g., children, adults, community groups, health care facilities) on domestic violence issues and to serve as advocate liaison for the Victim Advocate Unit.

Typical duties include the planning, analysis, and decision-making processes for the development and delivery of community outreach programs; provides reports and recommendations to Unit Manager concerning equipment inventory and maintenance, budgetary and personnel needs; assists Domestic Violence Intervention/Community Services Manager in planning and developing scheduled programs, special events and liaisons.

Requirements - Bachelor's degree in Business or Public Administration, Social Services, or other closely related field, plus one year of community program experience to include program coordination, liaison with community organizations, correspondence and report preparation, or an equivalent combination of education, experience and training. Applicants must include information which clearly demonstrates the above qualifications.

Applications can be downloaded from the County's website at www.goprincegeorgescounty.com Forward completed applications to: The Prince George's County Government, Office of Human Resources Management, 1400 McCormick Drive Suite 159, Largo, MD 20774.

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 Maria Gonzalez-Ruiz, an alum of the 2006 Academy.

My favorite sound is ... The rain on a tin roof over my head	Early morning before everybody wakes up	My favorite retreat... My own company	Don't worry about keeping your job, only worry about doing your job.	A wise woman minds her ignorance
My childhood nickname was... Little bird	My favorite word is... Keep trying with love	I appreciate... People who get it	The occupation, other than the one I am currently in, I would want is... Educator	If I had to choose an animal that symbolizes my personality, it would be a ... Giraffe
The last book I read was... "El penultimo Sueno" by a Columbian writer	If I could learn any language, it would be... English	My favorite indulgence is... Down time	The occupation I would most certainly not like to have is... Politician	If I could go anywhere in the world it would be ... Home, to my country
My least favorite thing to do is... Suffer foolishness	My greatest accomplishment (so far) has been... Helping others	If I could invite any three people (alive or deceased) to dinner, it would be... My father, my mother, and my oldest brother	My motto or favorite saying is...	One of my goals for 2006 is... To make the world a better place for somebody
My favorite time of day is...	I can't stand... Self-serving people	Best piece of advice I ever got was...		

Occupational Outlook (continued from page 5)

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center - Staff Attorneys

Description - MCVRC is seeking to hire two new staff attorneys to assist victims of crime in Maryland with pre-trial, trial, and post-conviction issues. Staff Attorneys respond to incoming requests for legal assistance, complete legal intakes, evaluate, research and develop cases, and provide direct legal representation to victims in civil (excluding domestic relations matters), criminal and administrative cases in state and federal court at both the trial and appellate levels. Additionally, Staff Attorneys prepare, plan, and conduct seminars and trainings regarding victims' rights and services and are engaged in outreach and community activities as they relate to services for victims of crime.

Requirements - Admission to the Maryland State Bar to practice law, experience conducting client interviews, legal research, the ability to spot legal issues, and broad computer skills. Desired skills include admission to the federal bar, experience with direct representation at the trial and/or appellate level, knowledge of victims' rights, experience conducting trainings and presentations, and outreach development.

Editorial Board

Debbie Creswell — Editor
Jen (Weber) Goode — Assistant Editor
Sharon Leasure — Assistant Editor
Eileen Katrick — Assistant Editor
Heather Pfeifer — Art Director/Layout

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