

# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

The Association Newsletter

Issue #58- April 2022

## Just a Thought

*What is so unique about the Roper Victim Assistance Academy? As one alum shares in this essay, it is something that has to be experienced.*

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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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## 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

*Ja'Nae Elder shares her thoughts about her time at the Academy, and how it has since influenced her personal and professional development.*

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## Just a thought...

### A look back at my time at the Academy

When I was asked to contribute the "Just a thought" essay for this edition of the newsletter, I was honored, but I had to sit and think for awhile about what I could say about the Roper Victim Assistance Academy (RVAAM) that hasn't already been shared in previous newsletters. There have been so many wonderful essays shared about its history and how it has become a model program for other state victim assistance academies, or how it has built one of the largest alumni networks in the nation. It is these very attributes that inspired me to apply to the Academy, despite the fact that I live and work in Virginia.

I am a probation counselor for Fairfax County's Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. I was serendipitously introduced to RVAAM through a training I attended with MCASA. I was interested

in expanding my knowledge and skill set related to advocacy, so I was eager to learn of other training opportunities I could attend. One of the facilitators of the MCASA training mentioned the Roper Victim Assistance Academy and V-STEP (Victim Service Training Enhancement Program). I was immediately curious, so I signed up for one of the VSTEP trainings on ethics. I learned a lot through this training, and had the opportunity to hear more about RVAAM. I decided I had to apply to the upcoming



winter academy. I was nervous, however, since only 35 applicants would be selected. (And little did we know at the time, it would also be the last in-person Academy for two years.) I was so excited when I was selected! But I was also nervous. What would spending a week away from my family be like, could the colleagues handle my case-load while I was out of

the office and off-the-grid, and could I handle the intense training schedule?

I arrived at Bon Secors that Sunday night both excited and nervous. While I did not know what the next five days would bring, I knew this really was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So, I committed myself to be open to receive all of the information and resources shared. And let me tell you, it was everything and more than what I hoped for. My classmates were an amazing group of individuals, with a wealth of experience and boundless compassion that they were willing to share. I was amazed at how quickly we bonded - although we were strangers when we walked into the retreat center that Sunday, we left as a family that Friday. We laughed and cried together, and in the process, created an unshakeable bond between us that has remained to this day.

After my time at the Academy, I have applied the knowledge and skills I learned with the youth and families that I serve. I have also utilized the alumni network that I am now a member of. Whenever I have a question or am looking for a resource, I send out an email or hop on a  
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## EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings Alumni!

Wow, what an exciting time of year! Spring is finally here and we can finally put away all of our winter clothes and shovels. And with summer right around the corner, it's that time of year to help recruit the next batch of Academy members through our "Power of One-to-One" campaign. This year's summer Academy will be held virtually from June 6th-10th. So, if you know of anyone who you think would benefit from this amazing experience, instruct them to go the RVAAM website at [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) to download a copy of the application, or they can also contact Anne Litecky Milum at [aliteky@ubalt.edu](mailto:aliteky@ubalt.edu)

April is such a busy month for victim service providers, with it being Sexual Assault Awareness month, Child Abuse Awareness month, and Crime Victims' Rights Week. Be sure to check out the "Save the Date" section for locations and times for all the memorial services and special events that will be hosted throughout the state in the coming weeks. And be sure to notify all of the victims you know so they can attend these events as well.

As always, the newsletter staff have done an amazing job bringing together the essays and material for this edition, and I would like to thank each of them for all of their hard work. We do have a few openings on the staff, so if you are interested in being a part of this amazing team, please let me know - we'd love to have you! And as always, if you ever have any ideas on what you would like to see included in future newsletters, please share your thoughts - your input is always welcome and important to us!

Wishing you all the best - until next time ...

*Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII*

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

*Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you. ~ Ruth Bader Ginsberg*



## 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!

### Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland

The Academy offers a rare opportunity to live, work, study, and interact with victims service providers from all areas of advocacy, from all over the state. While it is assumed that participants will have had a prior training in their area of specialization, the Academy provides a fundamental overview of the entire field of advocacy, including: victimology, victim rights, and victim assistance for residents in Maryland. Sessions are led by recognized leaders and practitioners in the field of victimology, criminal justice, and victim rights; and, focuses on skill building and best practices. For more information about the Academy, or to download an application, go to: [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us)

### National Center for Victims of Crime

The National Center for Victims of Crime connects victims to a myriad of resources. All of the programs and trainings offered and/or sponsored by NCVC are listed on the organization's website, as well as instructions on how to register. NCVC is also a good resource for the latest news on victims rights, as well as the latest research and statistics on victimization. To learn more, go to: <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/>

### U.S. Department of Justice: Office for Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime

This is the official website for the Office for Victims of Crime through the U.S. Department of Justice. OVC offers the latest news on victims' rights and advocacy, as well as provides a comprehensive repository of resources for victims and victim advocates and service providers. To learn more, go to: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>

### Maryland Crime Victim Resource Center

The Maryland Crime Victim Resource Center provides direct services to victims of crime in every jurisdiction in the state of Maryland, as well as provide information to victims and service providers about available resources in their community. MCVRC actively lobbies for legislation that will preserve and enhance victims rights. To learn more about MCVRC, go to: <http://www.mdcrimevictims.org>

## SAVE THE DATE!



### 2022 RVAAM Virtual Summer Academy

June 6th - 10th, 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)

### The 48th Annual National Organization of Victim Assistance Conference

August 1st - 4th, 2022

This year's annual meeting will be held in Denver, Colorado. To register, go to <https://www.trynova.org/no-va48/>

### 2022 Memorial Services - Sunday, April 24th

For any questions about this year's events, please contact Rebecca Allyn by email: [rebecca.allyn@maryland.gov](mailto:rebecca.allyn@maryland.gov) or phone (410) 697-9384

- **Harford County (Northern Region)** - Memorial to begin at 2pm at the Harford Community College, Chesapeake Center, 401 Thomas Run Road, Bel Air, MD; and virtually on the Harford County State's Attorney's Office Facebook page
- **Prince George's (Southern Region)** - Memorial to begin at 2pm on Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office YouTube page

- **Worcester County (Eastern Region)** - Memorial to begin at 1pm on the Worcester County State's Attorney's Office Facebook page

- **Washington County (Western Region)** - Memorial to begin at 2pm at the Hagerstown Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 11507 Robinwood Drive, HagerstownMD; and virtually on the Washington County Board of County Commissioners YouTube page or the Washington County Government Facebook page

### 2022 V-STEP Trainings

The summer schedule for VSTEP trainings will be published soon - so, be sure to check out the Academy's website ([www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us)) in the coming weeks to get the schedule and to register for one of these workshops. CEUs are available!

## 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...*

- **Angelica Cook (Class of 2017) and Audra Johnson (Class of 2007)** - Angelica and Audra completed the Paralegal Certificate Program through Boston University College, and are now certified paralegals! They will be using their certification to assist victims of domestic violence as part of the legal department at

Mid Shore Council on Family Violence. Congratulations to you both on this accomplishment - job well done!

- **Amanda Kitchen (Class of 2019, W)** - Amanda and her husband are expecting their first child, a baby girl, in May. Congratulations to you both - we know she is going to bring so much joy to your lives!
- **Susan Wallendorf (Class of 2017)** - Susan graduated with her Masters in Criminal Justice degree from the University of Baltimore this past December, and earned her certificate in Trauma-Informed Practices as well. Wow! That is a great accomplishment, and we know you are going to do a great job putting that knowledge to use in the field.



## 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 Victim 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.



**Congratulations to Our Newest Certified Victim Service Providers!**

Taylor McGuire, VASI  
Ja’Nae Elder, VASII

*“Certification for me helps to enhance recognition, credibility, and mobility in the field. MVACP certification also allows for professional identification with a group who shares a common background in victim services, and adheres to a Professional Code of Ethics. Thus, it enhances both my education and credentials in the field.” Yolanda Nelson-Swain*

**Just a Thought (Continued)**

call with one of alums, and they always come through for me. This network has proven to be an invaluable resource, and I am so grateful I am a part of it. That is what makes RVAAM so unique and has earned its standing as a model-program for other state victim assistance academies. The RVAAM faculty understand that connection and opportunities for continued learning through formal trainings and peer support networks helps to further professionalize the field of victim services and advocacy. And as such, they have created a framework that embraces and promotes both strategies through V-STEP and its alumni organization, the Victim Service Provider Network (VSPN).

So, if you know of a colleague who is looking to expand their knowledge, skills, and network in the field of victim services and advocacy, encourage them to apply to the upcoming RVAAM Academy in June. I am certain that it will surpass their expectations, as it did for me, and it will introduce them to an entire network of professionals who will continue to support them as they move forward in their career.

*Essay contributed by Adrienne Williams (Class of 2020, Winter)*

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

*It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or poli-*

*cies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of a new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!*



**Stalking and Protective Orders Passed the Judicial Proceedings Committee - SB 328 and SB 280** are two of the bills on our 2022 agenda. Last week, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee voted favorably on both bills. They now move to the full Senate for a floor vote. **We need you to call or email your State Senator to urge them to support these bills.** You can look up who represents you in the Maryland Senate [here](#).

**SB 328 - Criminal Law - Stalking - Definition** - This bill seeks to expand the current statute to include electronic communication and tracking devices. The original stalking statute was passed at a time before the existence of electronic methods of communication made it possible to track a person. As such, the current statute only addresses physical forms of following a victim. However, nowadays, most stalking is committed using electronic means - such as, hiding a GPS tracker in a victim's car, turning on the victim's phone location application to track their whereabouts, putting a camera or listening device in a child's toy in order to hear/watch what happens at the victim's home, or installing

spyware on victim's computer. With the constant evolution of technology, offenders are finding more ways to stalk their victims, which makes it more difficult for victims to ensure their own safety and that of their loved ones.

Under the proposed change in the law, such actions could be considered stalking if the victim can prove that the perpetrator intended to cause or knew or reasonably should have known that the conduct would cause serious emotional distress. Such changes would bring the law in line with the forms of stalking that are most widely used today.

**SB 280 - Interim and Temporary Protection Orders - Electronic Filing and Video Conferencing** - This bill seeks to allow victims of abuse who are eligible to request interim and/or temporary protective orders to do so virtually in a hospital or urgent care setting. Currently, if a victim is in one of those facilities due to a violence incident, they cannot leave the hospital protected from their abuser. Further, victims who are in a hospital or urgent care setting for other medical reasons, who trust their medical professional and feel safe to disclose their abuse, cannot receive a protective order before leaving. This legislation applies to everyone who is eligible for protective orders, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and vulnerable elder adults.

## Alumni Showcase

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

Swiss-American psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, once said "grieving the loss of a loved one is a universal process; however, when a family

member receives the news that a loved one has been murdered, reactions are more severe, exaggerated and complicated." This quote emphasizes the long-term effects that many families have to deal with when losing their loved one to homicide. More importantly, it highlights my current role as a Homicide Survivor Advocate Team Leader for a non-profit organization called Roberta's House, located in Baltimore City. As a Homicide Survivor Advocate Team Leader, I assist individuals and families through their grieving journey by addressing their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. Not only that, but I also assist survivors with resources to address their grief as a preventative measure and utilize a holistic approach for peer support, education, and self-empowerment, so survivors can move forward.

That is the reason why I wanted to attend the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland this year. I wanted to learn as much as possible what it means to be the true definition of a survivor advocate. My experience at RVAAM has also taught me so much more about victim advocacy and how to serve survivors within the community. It was truly an unforgettable experience. With that being said, it also showed me that I still have much to learn.

After I earned my Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, I began my journey in the criminal justice system. I started as correctional officer for the Department of Juvenile Services, and then shifted to a Parole and Probation Agent for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and then eventually to a Community Corrections Residential Services Coordinator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The most impactful lesson I learned from my time spent in each of these roles is that *everyone* I encountered had experienced some type of victimization. There was al-

ways some sort of painful story that led them down the path that landed them in the justice system. The saying, “hurt people, hurt people” kept coming to mind. So, after my time at the Roper Academy, I did some self-reflection. What I came to realize is that I could’ve done more to address the hurt and pain associated with the trauma many of the youth and adults had experienced when I was supervising them. But I really didn’t understand their experience, or have the knowledge or skills to help them heal. It is for that reason, I decided to continue my education and pursue my Masters degree in criminal justice at the University of Baltimore, with a focus on victim studies and trauma-informed practices. It also inspired me to become certified through the Maryland Victim Service Certification Program. By taking these steps, I believe I will have the necessary tools to become a well-rounded advocate. Above all, it will remind my survivors how a traumatic event does not define who they are, but that they have the strength within themselves to survive anything.

*Essay contributed by Ja’Nae Elder (Class of 2022, W).*

sionally. 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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**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in October 2022**



## 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 profes-