

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #35- July 2014

Just a Thought

Although LGBTQ individuals experience significantly higher rates of victimization than heterosexuals, the lack of education about the LGBTQ community has created barriers to their seeking help. Learn what you can do to provide the care, respect, and dignity LGBTQ victims deserve.

Page 1

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 this summer!

Page 2

Alumni Updates

Always find yourself thinking, "I wonder what happened to..." Check out what your fellow Alumni are up to!



Page 3

Best Practices

Read Lesa Schepers' essay entitled "A Mother's Plea" which recounts her own journey in learning about the unique challenges individuals within the LGTBQ community often face when interacting with their families, peers, and the broader community

Page 3

Welcome Class of 2014!

Join us in congratulating the newest members of the RVAAM Alumni family

Page 6



Just a thought...

LGBTQ Victims - Identity, Intersectionality, and Care

A disproportionate number of young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender or Questioning (LGBSTQ) say they have experienced some form of victimization based on their sexual orientation. This

rate of victimization is considerably higher than the rate of victimization of people who do not identify as members of the



LGBTQ community. According to the FBI, members of the LGBTQ community are victims of hate crime more than any other group in the United States (FBI 2012), these statistics holds for both youth and adults. Moreover, a recent report issued by the Centers for Disease Control (2014) on the 2010 Findings Victimization by Sexual Orientation in their National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, the CDC found that individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual have an equal or higher prevalence of experiencing IPV, SV, and stalking as compared to self-identified heterosexuals.

Bisexual women are disproportionately impacted. They experienced a significantly higher lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and /or stalking by an intimate partner, and rape and SV (other than rape) by any perpetrator, when compared to both lesbian and heterosexual women.

It is important to understand that sexual orientation is often coupled with other social and cultural identities that may also contribute to victimization. Intersectionality explores multiple identities

such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, and how these identities simultaneously impact an individual's life experience. It is important for providers and advocates to understand the complexities LGBTQ victims present so they may take a holistic approach to providing care for this unique population. By taking a holistic approach - one meets a victim where they are, and also acknowledges the multiple identities experienced by an LGBTQ person - care providers present themselves as respectful and understanding.

The concept of intersectionality is most accurate in capturing the essence of victimization experienced by LGBTQ people. For LGBTQ-identified individuals, trying to navigate multiple identities can cause feelings of depression and isolation which can make victimization even more traumatic. The challenge for providers becomes knowing how to effectively work with this population, because most individuals have spent years prioritizing their multiple identities in an attempt to keep themselves safe.

(Continued on page 5)

EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello Alumni!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome yet another class into our ever growing circle! This year's Academy class had such a wonderful week - so much learned and so many great friendships formed. I just couldn't be happier for all of you! I know it is a tough five days, but so well worth it! I look forward to hearing from all of you to learn how you can become certified Victim Assistance Specialists. You worked hard at the Academy, and you deserve the recognition.

I would like to thank Dr. Debra Stanley, Dr. Heather Pfeifer, Elaine Witman, Dave Thomas, and Linda Fair for all of their hard work and dedication to putting on yet another successful Academy. We are so blessed here in Maryland to have such a dedicated group of individuals who truly care about making things better for victims, and I am extremely proud and honored to work with all of them. I would also like to thank all of the Alumni who helped at the Academy this year - as always, your passion and dedication are much appreciated. We really could not do this without you!

Hope to see you all soon - wishing you a wonderful summer. Until next time...

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant." - Robert Louis Stevenson

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!

American Bar Association - LGBT Victims' Rights

This informative document provides in-depth information on domestic violence and LGBT victims, their specific rights, and how to get them help. Go to: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/domestic_violence1/publications/ABA_LGBT-rights_Final.authcheckdam.pdf

Office for Victims of Crime - Assisting Transgender Victims of Sexual Assault

This website provides an online guide to assisting Transgender victims of sexual assault. The site strives to educate victim service providers on the different tools available to assist these victims, and addresses some of the challenges providers may face. To learn more, go to <http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/forge/index.html>

National Center for Victims of Crime

This report by the NCVC addresses some of the most common issues faced with LGBT victimization and provides recommendations for ways in which we can better interact and assist LGBT victims of crime. For more information, go to http://www.victimsofcrime.org/docs/Reports%20and%20Studies/WhyItMatters_LGBTQreport_press.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Maryland Community Services Locator

This website provides a way for you to search for victim services specific to LGBT needs by county and city, and provides a description of the type of services each organization provides.

To learn more, go to http://www.mdc-sl.org/avjsc/csl_hotlines_vs.asp

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Prevention Programs

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) publishes annual reports on the number of hate violence experienced by LGBTQ and HIV-affected persons in the United States. The report, *Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities in the United States in 2013*, is the most comprehensive report on this violence in the United States, drawing on data collected from 14 anti-violence programs in 13 states across the country and Puerto Rico. To download a copy of the 2013 report, go to http://avp.org/storage/documents/2013_ncavp_hvreport_final.pdf

Save the Date

2014 RVAAM Academy Debriefing



July 15th, 2014,
11:30am-2:00pm,
12th floor Law School, University of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD

Believe it or not Class of 2014, it's

been over one month since you graduated! We hope you'll join us for a luncheon/debriefing, where you'll have the opportunity to share your thoughts about your experience at the Academy and tell us how you may have started to incorporate what you've learned into your job. Plus you'll get to reconnect with your new friends!

Alumni Updates

It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye another year has passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...



Look at Our Movers & Shakers!

Tania Golocovsky (Class of 2008) -

This past May Tania graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a Masters degree in Counseling. Way to go Tania!!

A Mother's Plea

This I Know For Sure ...

This thing we call life is not always an easy road to navigate. I realized this even more so when I found out my son is gay. Hearing the news felt like being punched in the gut. Being a person of faith, I wondered why God allowed this to happen. I felt like I had been faithful in raising my son in a Christian home. I wondered what I had done to cause this to happen. It was heart wrenching. The emotions I went through when hearing the news are nothing however to what my son went through. When my son first discovered he was gay, he prayed about it. He asked God to take these unwanted feelings away. This was not something he chose and he tried everything to make his feelings go away. When God didn't answer his prayers, he felt like God either didn't exist, or didn't love him. My son began to hate himself and feel like he was broken, and would no longer be able to attain the hopes and dreams he

had had growing up as a child - getting married and having children of his own. He was devastated, and began spiraling down into a deep depression.

He struggled with these feelings for two years before my husband and I even knew what was troubling him. We later found out he lived in constant fear that someone would find out his secret. This perpetual state of anxiety made him change from the happy, silly kid to a sad young man stuck in a pit of darkness. When I look back at pictures of him, I can visibly see when this change took place. He went from that kid who "hammed it up" in front of the camera, to the one who shrunk in the background. He eventually got so overwhelmed with his feelings of despair that he came up with a plan to end his life. Luckily my husband and I became aware of his plan and were able to get him the help he needed, and eventually to accept himself for who he was. We too had to go through our own soul searching to realize that our son did not choose to be gay. Like many people in society, we had once believed that LGBT individuals chose that life. But they don't ... it is just who they are innately. Society's continued misconception causes such damage to LGBT individuals and has been found to contribute to their feelings of depression, hopelessness, self-hate, and even push them towards self-harm.

Fortunately my son came to accept who he is, and over the years has befriended many other LGBT kids. Sadly, every single one of the kids he has met has reported that they have been bullied in some manner (e.g., name calling, threats, disparaging jokes, physical harm). What my son, husband and I have come to realize is that the mistreatment of LGBT individuals is a huge problem. And the abuse doesn't just come from peers and strangers. Sadly, many LGBT youth are rejected by their parents, and often thrown out of their homes after dis-

closing their truth. We even know of a parent who disowned their child and went as far as to burn their birth certificate. Sadly that parent later found their child hanging from a tree outside their high school. The rejection by his own family was just too much to bear.

With social media on the rise, cyber bullying of LGBT individuals has skyrocketed. For many LGBT individuals, they now worry that they will be "outed" to the whole world. Not surprisingly, there has been a corresponding spike in the suicide rate among LGBT youth since the surge of social media platforms.

This I know for sure ... there is a great deal of misconception about LGBT individuals. Sadly they are judged unfairly due to other people's ignorance. Consequently, hopelessness, sadness, and loss are often their companions. This can not continue. They deserve the same respect, dignity, and love as everyone else. For my husband and I, we have found great support from the non-profit Christian ministry called The Gay Christian Network (GCN), which was founded in 2001 to try to help build bridges and offer support to those who feel caught in the crossfire of one of today's most divisive culture wars. GCN hosts a conference every year that is open to everyone who is interested in learning about their mission and is looking for support. One of the really special things they do at the conference is offer parents of LGBT youth a button to wear that says "free mom hugs" or "free dad hugs." They then allow time during the conference for these parents to stand in a hallway and give out hugs to those who have been struggling with feelings of abandonment by their own parents. Not surprisingly, when the time comes, the hallway quickly fills with individuals who just need a loving and healing hug.

While the journey my son and husband and I underwent together was one of the most difficult of our lives,

we are a stronger family as a result, and we are so proud of our son. One day, I plan on going to the GCN conference and stand in that hallway wearing my own “free mom hugs” button.

* *Essay contributed by Lesa Schepers. Lesa lives in Bel Air with her husband and two children. It is her passion to see dignity, respect, and love brought to the LGBT community. You can read more about her journey on her blog Love Matters at www.love-matters.org*



News From the Field

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

* **Senate Bill 212:** This past spring, the Maryland House of Delegates approved a bill banning discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Senate Bill 212, otherwise known as the Fairness for All Marylanders Act of 2014, will protect transgender Marylanders from labor, housing, public accommodation, and employment discrimination.

* **Senate Bill 922:** On July 1, 2014, Senate Bill 922, Crime Victim and Crime Victim’s Representative - Elec-

tronic Notification, went into effect. The law expands Maryland’s notification requirements for victims of crime and their representatives. Under existing law, victims of certain Circuit Court cases receive notice of hearings via the U.S. Postal Service. Under the new law, victims and victim’s representatives in jurisdictions using the upgraded Maryland Electronic Court System (MDEC), will be able to request and receive notice of hearings by email. In October 2014, Anne Arundel County will be the first jurisdiction to implement the MDEC.

* **House Bill 355:** On July 1, 2014, HB 355, Criminal Procedure - Programs for Survivors of Homicide Victims, went into effect. The law creates infrastructure and funding authorizations to assist family members of homicide victims.

* The Maryland General Assembly found that:

* “[S]urvivors of homicide victims in the State:

(1) lack necessary counseling and follow-up services to:

(i) treat the survivors with dignity, respect, and sensitivity; and

(ii) inform the survivors of the rights to which they are entitled by law; and

(2) have the help of only extremely limited support services in some parts of the State.”

* The new law requires the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention to help establish and expand programs available to the families of homicide victims. Services include, but are not limited to counseling, legal, mental health, and advocacy.

Certification News

Want to learn more about the certification process and learn how you can be a cut above the rest? Here’s what you need to know!

There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:



* **Level I (VASI)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) multi-

ple choice exam; e) \$50 application processing fee

* **Level II (VASII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay /short answer exam; e) \$75 application processing fee.

* **Level III (VASIII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.

There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates who want to remain current with their certification:

* **Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.

* **Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete written exam; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.

* **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete oral presentation; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials and study guides for the written exams are available online at www.rvaam.org (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

Congratulations to the following Certified Advocates!

Rose Albert (Class of 2012) - Level II

Just a Thought (Cont.)

Societal oppression (racism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism, for example) often runs parallel to victimization, and enduring such oppression

has been intricately woven in the the LGBTQ experience. Many members of the LGBTQ community have adapted to their unique social challenges by functioning as though their situation is "normal." Navigating several identities in the face of oppression and victimization may be all an individual knows, making providing services for LGBTQ members a unique challenge. Consequently crimes against members of the LGBTQ community may go unreported.

Issues such as intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault, and police misconduct may have become so commonplace in the lives of many LGBTQ people that seeking professional help seems unnecessary. In addition to seeking professional services for victimization, finding trusted, culturally sensitive, and LGBTQ-affirming services that do not place heterosexuality at the forefront can be challenging and discouraging.

Additional barriers to reporting and seeking professional services for victimization include the fear of being "outed" to the larger community. Many LGBTQ individuals have expressed a fear that their sexual orientation or gender expression will become the primary focus rather than the victimization they have experienced. There is also an intense fear of reinforcing stereotypes and potentially betraying the larger LGBTQ community. This premise is often seen in communities that experience high levels of oppression and marginalized identities.

When working with LGBTQ-identified individuals around victimization, it is important for practitioners to remember that their patients' / clients experiences are unique because they are intensely multidimensional; their other social and cultural identities can also present barriers to effective care if they are not identified and adequately addressed. "Meeting individuals where they are" becomes a significant exer-

cise. Jane Doe Inc., a division of the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, has highlighted several key components to being an effective agent of healing and change for LGBTQ victims:

- * Honestly address your own feelings about the LGBTQ community;
- * Educate yourself and do not rely on victims to answer your questions;
- * Do not assume anything; make sure to frame your questions in a sensitive manner that does not assume the gender or orientation of the victim or the perpetrator;
- * Avoid inappropriate questions; make sure you do not ask unnecessary and inappropriate questions about the victim's sexual behaviors, practices, or bodies.

Moreover, to continuously provide the highest level of service to LGBTQ victims it is important that service professionals collaborate with local LGBTQ agencies to gain a deeper understanding of the community and its complexities. Finally, victim service organizations and agencies should provide culturally sensitive training and education for their staff and personnel, and create an inclusive environment by adopting gender neutral language, and modifying forms and policies to take into account they adequately meet the needs of the LGBTQ community.

Only by educating oneself, our colleagues, and the community at large about the LGBTQ community and their unique needs, will we be in the right place to provide the care and support that LGBTQ victims deserve.

Essay contributed by D. LaShay Harvey M.Ed.; Doctoral candidate - Human Sexuality, The Johns Hopkins University. (Class of 2011)

Congratulations Class of 2014!

Please extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the RVAAM Alumni Family!

Debra Brewer	Erricka Bridgeforth	Shadonna Brooks
Sueellen Cramer	Stacia Dashiell	Jessica Drake
Lashondra Felder	Cheryl Green	Hidaya Hamilton
Tracey Harris	Ann Holtzman	Carolyn Hutchings
Elaine Jenkins	Richard Kelly	Eric King
Jacqueline Lisjuan	Andene Palmisano	Marzana Parvin
Jessica Roman	Elizabeth Rosendale	Lakendra Schwendig
Kezia Snipe	Rebecca Snyder	Demetria Spriggs
Kaila Stanley	Kevin Stewart	Shawn Trout
Angela Wharton	Deborah Wendland	Dorothy Whitehead
Robert Whitehead	Dawn Zierdt	Yuliya Zuback

Editorial Board

Debbie Bradley — Editor
Michelle Lee — Assistant Editor
Keith Gethers — Assistant Editor
Ashley Fundack — Assistant Editor
Heather Pfeifer — Managing Editor

Alumni Directory

The 2014 Alumni Directory, which includes the addition of the most recent Academy class members will soon be available for distribution. However, we still would like your help to keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information changes, please contact Debbie Bradley via email at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in October 2014



What do you want to hear? Have any news to share?

Are you itching to learn more 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 would be beneficial for our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have about a topic to profile in one of our upcoming newsletters to Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org ... We also are happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!