

# Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



A Publication of the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch

Spring 2015 | Volume 6, Issue 4

## Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Spring is quickly approaching. And it serves as a reminder of new beginnings and limitless possibilities. It also offers hope and opportunities of enhanced relations between law enforcement and victims of crime. This year's theme for National Crime Victims Rights Week -Engaging Communi-

ties. Empowering Victims- presents another opportunity to champion advocacy and support for victims. It allows the public to learn about resources that are available in the aftermath of victimization. The Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch aims to offer a voice for those who interact with

the criminal justice system. We are an integral component in helping to make a difference for families and survivors. With us, engaging communities and empowering victims with dignity, urgency and respect is always paramount.

## Upcoming Events and Activities

### April 2015

**National Crime Victims' Rights Week**  
NCVRW is April 19-25, 2015. The theme is Engaging Communities,



Empowering Victims. Throughout this week, help us to support and raise awareness of the rights and interests of crime victims around the country. For more information, contact 202-307-5983 or visit [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov).

The Metropolitan Police Department will host Next-of-Kin meet-

ings for immediate family members of unsolved homicide cases April 20-24 from 10 AM to 8 PM at 101 M St., SW, Homicide Branch. Families must contact the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at 202-645-6363 to schedule an appointment.

**National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)**

The SAAM 2015 campaign aims to provide resources for campus sexual violence prevention. Let's engage the community and take action to create safer campuses. For more information, contact 717-909-0710 or [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)



### June 2015

**National Child Abuse Prevention Month**  
This is a time for families and communities to work together to prevent child abuse and neglect. Let's promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families by sharing awareness strategies and activities. For more information, contact 800-394-3366 or [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

### June 2015



**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month**

Pride month is celebrated to honor the 1969 Stonewall Riots in Manhattan and includes parades, picnics, parties, etc. Let's recognize the impact of LGBT individuals by participating in these world-wide celebrations. For more information, visit [www.loc.gov/lgb](http://www.loc.gov/lgb).

**Camp Forget-Me-Not/Camp Erin DC®**  
June 26-28, 2015

Camp Forget-Me Not/Camp Erin DC® is a free, three-day weekend camping

experience for DC Metro area youth ages 7-17 that have experienced the death of a loved one. For more information, contact Cynthia Pearson at 202-204-5022.

### August 2015

**National Night Out**

This year's National Night Out will be celebrated on Tuesday, August 4, 2015. One night a year, neighbors across the country participate in various community events to promote police-community relationships and neighborhood camaraderie. Let's send



the message that communities are organized and fighting back against crime. Visit [www.natw.org](http://www.natw.org) to register your community today!

—Megan Butts, intern

## MPD's Unsolved Cases Website

**O**n the website of the Metropolitan Police Department is an area dedicated to unsolved homicide cases. That area located under "Unsolved Cases" allows the public to review unsolved homicide cases in the District of Columbia according to the year of the ho-

micide. The website includes information about the homicide location, date, time, and the name of the decedent. It also provides the telephone tip line and anonymous texting information for those individuals who would like to remain anonymous. Further, the website explains how individuals

could be rewarded financially up to \$25,000 for any tips that lead to an arrest in a case. For more information, please visit [www.mpdc.dc.gov/unsolved](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/unsolved) or contact the Victim Service Branch at (202) 724-4339.

—Dawn Christie

## You Are Your Community: How ANCs Help Bring Neighborhoods Together

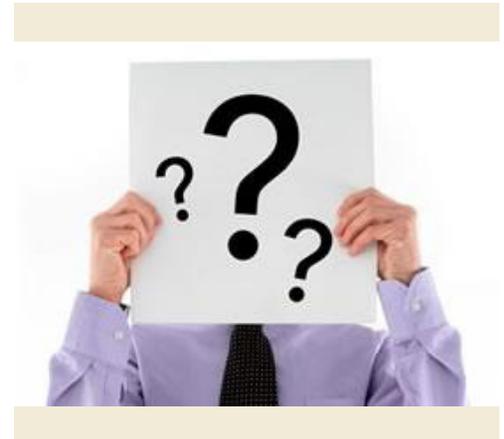


**A**s we hear and observe violent crime trends and criminal activity concerns, residents throughout the region have stated their concerns about the safety, and future of their neighborhoods. Often these concerns are coupled with the sense of overwhelming defeat. Feeling unheard and overlooked, communities are conceding that nothing they do makes a difference or matters, or things will never change the status quo of what is going on their street, or the places they call home.

Although residents may be overwhelmed by the activity in their communities, each one can make a difference. If we take a quick glance back at history, we can observe that some of the major historical social

changes took place due to the initial actions of one person, one sole individual. The good news is that individually and collectively, we can become "engaged." We can participate in community networks to address the issues currently facing our communities.

Uniquely, the District of Columbia has community networks, called advisory neighborhood commissions (ANCs) which are held monthly in each ward to address community concerns. These concerns



range from crime prevention to trash pickup. To find out how you can get involved or attend meeting, view the link below. Click on the link to view a schedule of the next ANC meeting in your ward, go to [www.anc.dc.gov/event](http://www.anc.dc.gov/event).

—Helen Hall

### How May We Assist You?

#### Victim Services Branch

Tyria Fields ..... Manager ..... 724-4339 ..... [tyria.fields@dc.gov](mailto:tyria.fields@dc.gov)

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) provides support services to homicide victims and survivors throughout the investigative process.

#### Family Liaison Specialists Unit

Carla Okonkwo ..... Supervisor ..... 645-9629 ..... [carla.okonkwo@dc.gov](mailto:carla.okonkwo@dc.gov)  
 Marlene Castro ..... Family Liaison Specialist ..... 645-9631 ..... [marlene.castro@dc.gov](mailto:marlene.castro@dc.gov)  
 Megan Riley ..... Family Liaison Specialist ..... 645-5537 ..... [megan.riley@dc.gov](mailto:megan.riley@dc.gov)

The Victim Specialists Unit (VSU) provides support, information, and referrals to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

#### Victim Specialists Unit

Helen Hall ..... Victim Specialist ..... 724-8921 ..... [helen.hall@dc.gov](mailto:helen.hall@dc.gov)  
 Kayce Simmons ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-6006 ..... [kayce.simmons@dc.gov](mailto:kayce.simmons@dc.gov)  
 Esther U. Thomas ..... Victim Specialist ..... 724-2071 ..... [estheru.thomas@dc.gov](mailto:estheru.thomas@dc.gov)  
 Tramaine Newsome ..... Victim Specialist ..... 724-6566 ..... [tramaine.newsome@dc.gov](mailto:tramaine.newsome@dc.gov)  
 Beyshinah Woods ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-6007 ..... [beyshinah.woods@dc.gov](mailto:beyshinah.woods@dc.gov)

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) provides supportive services to secondary victims of unsolved homicides. Additionally, this unit offers victim services and assistance to victims of violent assaults in the District of Columbia.

#### Major Case Victims Unit

Dawn M. Christie ..... Victim Specialist ..... 724-2215 ..... [dawnm.christie@dc.gov](mailto:dawnm.christie@dc.gov)  
 Laverne Harley ..... Victim Specialist ..... 727-5391 ..... [laverne.harley@dc.gov](mailto:laverne.harley@dc.gov)

## A Presidential Campaign on Sexual Assault

### Resources

The White House  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

It's On Us Campaign  
[www.itsonus.org](http://www.itsonus.org)

You're Not Alone  
[www.notalone.gov](http://www.notalone.gov)

Sexual Assault Awareness has been receiving a lot of national attention recently. From the NFL to the President of the United States, these major forces have targeted men on this urgent matter to get involved by making personal commitments to help stop sexual assault.

President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden announced "It's On Us," a multi-platform media campaign and national action plan targeted at ending campus sexual assault. "We're here to say today that it's not on you," Obama said, referencing the

survivors who spoke out at the launch and have taken action across the nation to end sexual violence. "This is a problem that matters to all of us."

The It's On Us campaign, which is targeted at young people and especially young men, seeks to shift societal norms around sexual violence. It aims to inspire everyone to see prevention as their responsibility. It promotes accountability by creating environments where sexual assault is unacceptable and survivors are supported. It's On Us also seeks to support student activism and build on existing efforts by campus sex-

ual assault survivors across the country to hold colleges and universities accountable for failing to support survivors or take rape seriously.

As Victim Specialists of the Metropolitan Police Department, we are committed to helping survivors of sexual assault. For Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2015, (SAAM), we will be informing college campuses in D.C., about our services and taking supportive resources to help spread the awareness.

Individuals can support and learn more at [ItsOnUs.org](http://ItsOnUs.org) and [notalone.gov](http://notalone.gov).

—Tramaine Newsome, MACJ

## Stop. Look. Listen: Engaging Communities during NCVRW and Beyond

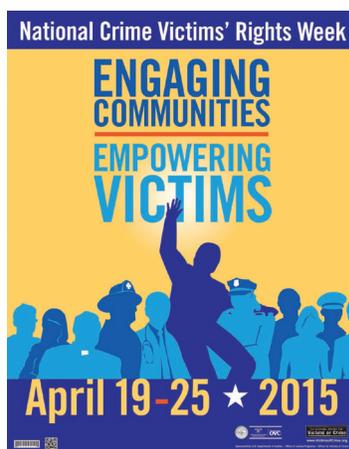
### Resources

National Crime Victims Rights Week  
[www.ovc.gov/awareness](http://www.ovc.gov/awareness)

More than a chant for minor children crossing the street, the mantra Stop, Look, Listen can also apply to communities engaged in ending violent crime and bringing perpetrators to justice. There are many fallacies communities give way to in effort to continue victimizations. Here we can simply address things residents should consider.

Things to consider:

1. Talk about violence in our communities. During a recent outreach initiative with local libraries in the District of Columbia, Victim Specialists tabled and provided materials to community members. Many patrons denied that violence, particularly domestic violence, occurred in their communities. Without addressing the reality that many people go home and live in fear of their family and domestic partners, victims, especially domestic violence



victims will continue to experience isolation; a significant barrier to accessing services.

2. Look out for one another. Every citizen that is part of a civilized society is in part responsible for the future and current state of said society. Turning a blind eye to crime and refusing to report, benefits no one. Criminals become emboldened when they are not held accountable for their actions. The best way to affect change is by doing something

different. Shine the light on perpetrators that are destroying our communities.

3. Support all victims of crime. "They were in the wrong place at the wrong time", "What was she wearing?" and "Why are they staying in that relationship?" are a few of several questions people use to distance themselves from a victim of violent crime. The assumption is that a victim had to be doing something wrong or participatory in their victimization. This is a normal reaction from bystanders because no one wants to face the reality that we are all vulnerable and capable of being victims of violent crime.

In 2015, become more active with neighbors and agencies in effort to ensure safer communities for all of us. Review events associated with previous and current National Crime Victims' Rights' Week at [www.ovc.gov/awareness](http://www.ovc.gov/awareness).

—Kayce Simmons

# Crime Victim Compensation Program

**T**he Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) is a program that provides assistance to victims of violent crimes and their families in the District of Columbia. The Compensation Program is critical in meeting the needs of victims as they transition from victim to survivor. CVCP empowers victims as they negoti-

ate through the criminal justice process by providing assistance for a number of out of pocket crime-related expenses. These expenses may include medical treatment, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, loss wages, crime scene clean-up, clothing replacement held as evidence, and temporary emergency shelter when necessary for the safety of the victim.

For additional information on eligibility and how to file a claim, please contact:

## Crime Victim Compensation Program

Court Building A, 515 5th Street NW, Suite 109, Washington, D.C. 20001  
202-879-4216

—Carla Okonkwo

# NCVRW: Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims



**T**his year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme focuses on the importance of engaging the community and empowering victims. In order to help victims, service providers must listen and understand their needs. Partnering with the community is essential to understanding the impact of the victimization. Empowering victims means facilitating access to services. The Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch- Family Liaison Specialists Unit en-

ures that family members of homicide victims have access to the detective assigned of their loved ones case through the Department's Next of Kin Meetings. During these meetings families are given the opportunity to obtain new information and discuss the progress the case. The meetings were established to empower families to take a more active role in the investigative process. Each year the meetings are held in conjunction with the NCVRW at the Homicide Branch. Family members of open homicides

cases for 2010-2015 are among the group invited to this year's meetings.

Appointments are available the week of April 20 through April 24, 2015 and can be scheduled between the hours of 10AM-8 PM. Families must contact the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363 to schedule an appointment.

The Fall Meetings will be held in October 2015 in conjunction with the Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

—Marlene Castro

## MURDERMISTAKEN's 8th Annual Children's Christmas Party

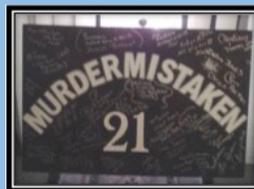
**T**he holiday season can be especially challenging for those who have lost a loved one to homicide. This season of celebration can produce countless emotions and memories for those coping with grief and loss. Many survivors feel the added financial pressures that come with the holiday and providing gifts to the children left to grieve the loss of a parent or other family member.

For the past eight years, homicide survivor and founder of MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc., Ms. Shanda Smith, worked tirelessly to organize a holiday event to engage and empower the children and siblings of homicide victims. As a mother who experienced the death of two children — Rodney and Volante Smith — on December 17, 1993, Shanda knows personally the pain and struggle of

supporting children after a tragic loss.

With the help of several agencies, friends, and other survivors, Ms. Smith has successfully secured gifts through donations for every child in attendance. Shanda's motto is "even if we don't have toys, we still have each other, and we will have a good time at the party." Each child and survivor is treated as though they are members of her own family.

On December 20, 2014 over 30 families including 54 children, joined together for MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc. 8th Annual Children's Christmas Party. Survivors in attendance had a time of fellowship as they



enjoyed crafts, games, music, gifts, food, and the support that only other survivors can offer one another in times of grief. In honor of the 21st anniversary of the loss of Shanda's children, special boards were displayed for survivors to write tributes to honor the loved ones they gathered to remember. Amongst all of the chaos that can come with the holiday season, the heart of this celebration lies in the love that is felt as survivors come together to support one another on their journey to healing.

—Megan Riley

### Learn More

For more on how to assist or register for MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc. 9th Annual Children's Christmas Party please contact: **Shanda Smith** at 202 446-9433 or [murdermistaken@yahoo.com](mailto:murdermistaken@yahoo.com).

# Elder Sexual Abuse

## Resources

**Elder Care Locator**  
800-677-1116

**Adult Protective Services**  
**24 Hour Hotline**  
202-541-3950

**IONA Counseling Services**  
**and Support Groups for Care-**  
**givers**  
202-895-9448 (Ask for the  
Helpline to Register)

**E**lder sexual abuse occurs any time a person 60 or over is forced, tricked, coerced, or manipulated into unwanted sexual contact. It also includes an elder who is unable to give informed consent or sexual contact between service providers and their elderly clients.

Sexual offenders focus on the vulnerability of the senior and who they consider a good target to overpower and manipulate. Sexual offenders look for those who they think would not be believed. For example, people with disabilities are often not believed when they disclose that they have been sexually assaulted in their care facility. One such case, an aide who had sexually assaulted a senior denied that

he had committed a sexual assault. Law enforcement could not establish proof of the senior's disclosure. Unfortunately, not only was the alleged perpetrator not criminally charged, but, was allowed to keep his job caring for seniors of the nursing home.

Elder sexual abuse happens where the senior lives, most often in the home where abusers are often their adult children or other family members like grandchildren, or spouse of elders. Elder sexual abuse also happens in institutional settings, especially in long-term care facilities.

Rape myths have left elders out of the picture of victimization by people's inability to see them as victims vs. younger victims of sexual assault. El-

der victims need the same services, crisis intervention and safety planning as younger victims. We need to apply the same concepts of nonjudgmental emotional support, medical care, and legal information when appropriate.

Signs of elder sexual abuse:

- » Bruises around breasts or genitals
- » Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- » Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- » Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

If you know an elder who has experienced the above, call the resources below.

—Esther Urbano Thomas

# Sexual Assault Reporting on College Campuses

**N**ow is a good time to share information about this important topic with the city's college community for this issue of Empower!

Since 1990, colleges and universities have been required under the Jeanne Clery Act to report all on-campus crimes to the federal government. But schools haven't always been compliant and the US Department of Education announced earlier this year that it was investigating more than 50 universities for mishandling sex assault investigations. Originally known as the Campus Security Act, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 USC § 1092(f)) is the

landmark federal law that requires colleges and universities across the United States to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses. The law is tied to an institution's participation in federal student financial aid programs and it applies to most institutions of higher education both public and private. The Clery Act is enforced by the US Department of Education.

The law was amended in 1992 to add a requirement that schools afford the victims of campus sexual assault certain basic rights, and was amended again in 1998 to expand the reporting requirements. The 1998 amendments also formally named the law in memory of Jeanne Clery (see below).

Subsequent amendments in 2000 and 2008 added provisions dealing with registered sex offender notification and campus emergency response. The 2008 amendments also added a provision to protect crime victims, "whistleblowers", and others from retaliation. For more information, go to <http://www.cleryact.info/> or <http://clerycenter.org/>

In recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), the Victim Services Branch will focus on educating college campuses on ways to support victims of sexual assaults.

—Beyshinah Woods, LGSW, CA

# Letters & Kudos

## Share your story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to [victim.services@dc.gov](mailto:victim.services@dc.gov) or send via US Mail to:

Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
101 M Street SW, WDC 20024

Hello Megan,  
I want to send my Gratitude and Appreciation to you. You did it again. You made it possible to arrange to have Our Police Officer Representing their position.

I'm so ever grateful for your support in making it happen. When leaving my house en-route going; there were officers on the bike and at the bottom of the hill all the way too my location. They were all posted up. In position to make sure everybody was safe. I can't Thank You enough.

Kudos to you all: My family, friends, community and foremost the crowd.

Love you for being you!  
Peace was there by God's Grace...

Tell them we all say Thank You

—GP

## GW Thanks Victim Services for Participating in Safety Expo

On behalf of the George Washington University Office of Emergency Management, GW Police Department and the Office of Health and

Safety we want to thank you for taking the time out of your day to participate at the GW Safety Expo on September 17. With your participation we were able to talk to, and educate over 1,500 members of the GW community about personal safety and emergency preparedness, which gave this year's Safety Expo the most successful one to date!

Though we are several months away from next year's Safety Expo, we would like you to go ahead and save the date for September 16, 2015.

Should there is anything our office can help or assist you with please let us know. We can be reached at **202.994.4936** or [oem@gwu.edu](mailto:oem@gwu.edu).

—Hallie Nix  
GW Office of Emergency Management



Metropolitan Police Department  
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit  
101 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024