

THE VICTIMS' VOICE

Quarterly Newsletter

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A MESSAGE FROM THE STATE VICTIM ADVOCATE



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CT State Victim Advocate

As I merge into my third year at the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA), I am brought once again to analyzing what it means to be a “victim advocate.” In the most general terms, a victim advocate is a person who assists the crime victim to ensure the victim’s voice is heard, and secondarily, assure the crime victim is able to successfully navigate the criminal justice system.

Victim advocacy in our court system, turns on cooperation from all members of the criminal justice system, from law enforcement to corrections. Although, each agency has a separate agenda and a distinct set of goals, separate from that of a victim advocate, the key component of the justice system, is seeking justice, which begins and ends with the crime victim - the individual whose life is forever altered because of a crime, no matter what magnitude, that has been committed against them. It matters not what background, or social economic class, nor criminal history nor race the victim emerges from. Rather, what is imperative to seeking justice, is the assurance that all crime victims are treated with respect and dignity - a right guaranteed to the people of Connecticut by the Connecticut Constitution.

So how do we, who populate the machinery that is the criminal justice system, ensure justice to all crime victims? It is as simple as the old cliché, “treat others as you would like to be treated”. Kindness, compassion and empathy, regardless of our role in the system can be achieved and is essential to ensure crime victim’s Constitutional Rights are guarded.

Imagine, if you will, you are in your home, and there is a knock at the door. Strange as it might be since it is 10:00 pm and you are about to turn in for the night. You look out the window, and observe, as your heart sinks, two patrol cars in your driveway. You open the door, simultaneously realizing your teenage daughter has not returned from her evening out with the girls. As the door slowly cascades across three strangers, with dead eyes, and clothed in uniforms, your life changes and will never be the same. Your sixteen year old daughter has been found murdered in a local park. You cannot breathe; your legs give way. The life you once new has crumbled, your beautiful daughter will never get married, have children, or grace your presence with her smile. You begin to try and navigate these strange waters; unfamiliar to you as a lay person.

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Visit the OVA’s website at:

www.ova.state.ct.us



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The police officers are talking in a strange tongue you do not understand. Terms you are unfamiliar with, while you struggle to grapple with the reality of your loss.

You are transported to the medical examiners office. You identify the body of your beloved daughter. A loss so deep and unspeakable has taken your voice and you cannot speak, just nod to identify your sweet precious little girl. As your journey through the funeral, the arraignment of her boyfriend is unfolding in a court nearby. The man who stole her life is arraigned, a term you have only learned on Law and Order. Thereafter, numerous court dates unfold. At one point you meet a victim advocate who explains the system to you, and yet, in the haze of the loss, you cannot clearly grasp the advocates words - register for notification, send a letter to the State's Attorney to participate in the criminal justice system, an impact statement to read in court that will explain to the court the magnitude of your loss. You think, what ever can I say to explain my loss? How can I ever imagine writing any grouping of words to explain, explain how it feels to suddenly not know how to breathe or walk knowing your child is lost?

The day comes fro the sentence of the offender. You learn the charge has been reduced to Manslaughter 2nd and the offender is being offered 10-15 years with a right to argue. Argue what? My child did not get to argue for a few more hours with me or my family? You learn these "negotiations" took place at a "judicial pre-trial"; a judicial pre-trial you were told you did not have to attend. Your mind is spinning. You stand up and read your impact statement, all the while, feeling like you have betrayed your daughter by this act of reducing your loss to writing. Your legs are heavy and you stand not more than 15 feet from the man who took your daughter's life. Your voice sounds foreign to you, as the words escape your mouth. People are talking behind you. Marshals are exchanging positions around the court room. A radio blurts out the noise. How is the world still spinning when my daughter is dead, you wonder.

The prosecutor begins to list a litany of previous convictions, Assault 3rd, Disorderly Person, Breach of Peace. You look at the offender, a man who ate in your home with your daughter. A man you realize, you do not know.

Next the defense attorney begins, what you soon learn to be, a thirty minute explanation as to why, the offender, took your daughter's life. Excuses, from where you stand. You begin to cry and strangers steal looks at you. The Judge, expressing his condolences to you and your family, sentences the offender to 12 years, and 5 years probation.

You are escorted outside. The advocate explains the need to "register" with the Department of Corrections to receive notification of the offender's release, as well as have an opportunity to speak at a Parole or Probation Hearing. You leave the court house. Your heart has been carved out and your walk to your car, attempting to cover the gaping hole in your chest that once housed your daughter.

This is the perspective of many crime victims' as they journey through the criminal justice system and attempt to find reason and justice in our system.

As you get up tomorrow, and begin another day, please remember, that each crime victim you encounter has only ONE crime they are concerned with - the crime committed upon them. It does not matter to the victim how many cases you have or how tired you are or what your day was like. It does not matter to the victim if their case is a larceny of their wallet or the rape of a child. The crime, regardless of the magnitude, leaves scars on all crime victims. So a smile, a how are you, the memory of a name, a phone call in between court dates - these gestures mean the world to each and every crime victim.

To many crime victims, their only desire is to feel like someone cares and they are heard. We who deal with the criminal justice system know that the system is not friendly and not just ,in many aspects. Thus it is our job to ensure that our corner of the world has compassion and empathy, despite the outside world. To have the gift to serve the public, as many of us do, is just that, a gift. We all serve the public. We can do better.

As you slowly lift the latch to your card door; imagine how you would replace every piece of your shattered life together with two dimensional pictures and stale memories of what once was?

Sadly, the facts in this story are gathered directly from the numerous cases we at the OVA have worked on over the past two years.

KNOW THE RULES...

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS to teach children

1. Always **CHECK FIRST** with your parents, guardians, or the trusted adult in charge before you go anywhere or do anything. Be sure to **CHECK IN** regularly with your parents, guardians, or a trusted adult when you're not with them.
2. Always **TAKE A FRIEND** with you when playing or going anywhere. It's safer and more fun.
3. Don't be tricked by people who offer you special treats or gifts. Never accept anything from anyone without your parents' or guardians' permission.
4. Stay **SAFER** when you're home alone by keeping the door locked; not opening the door for or talking to anyone who stops by unless the person is a trusted family friend or relative, you feel comfortable being alone with that person, and the visit has been preapproved by your parents or guardians; and never telling anyone who calls that you're home by yourself. If your parent or guardian cannot be reached, have a neighbor or other trusted adult you are able to call if you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused or there's an emergency.
5. Never go into a public restroom by yourself.
6. Never go alone to malls, movies, parks, or video arcades. Take a friend with you, and always **CHECK FIRST** with your parents or guardians to make sure it's okay.
7. Don't panic if you feel lost. Identify the safest place to go or person to ask for help in reuniting you with your parents or guardians. Safe helpers could be a uniformed law-enforcement or security officer, store salesperson with a nametag, person with a nametag who is working at the information booth, or mother with children. Never search for your parents or guardians on your own, and never go with anyone who is trying to reunite you with them.
8. Be careful when you play. Stay away from pools, canals, and other bodies of water unless you are with a trusted adult. Don't play near busy streets or deserted areas, and never take shortcuts unless you have your parents' or guardians' permission.
9. Don't wear clothes or carry items with your name on the outside, and don't be confused just because a person you don't know calls out your name.
10. Don't get into a vehicle or go near a vehicle with anyone in it unless you are with your parents, guardians, or a trusted adult. Never take a ride from anyone without **CHECKING FIRST** with your parents or guardians.
11. Be careful playing or riding your bicycle as it gets dark. Sometimes it is difficult for people driving to see you. Wear reflectors and protective clothing if your parents or guardians say you may play outside after dark.
12. Don't be afraid to say **NO** and **GET AWAY** from any situation making you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. **TRUST YOUR FEELINGS**, and be sure to **TELL** a trusted adult if anything happens to make you feel this way. And, it's never too late to tell a trusted adult what happened.

1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)

www.missingkids.com

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
U.S. Department of Justice



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Have a safe and fun summer!

USEFUL RESOURCES



“Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. (CCADV), Inc. is a membership organization whose purpose is to work together to end Domestic Violence by advocating for victims, and changing the social conditions, beliefs, and social actions that perpetuate abuse against victims of domestic violence.”

If you would like to find out more information about this organization, please visit their website at www.ctcadv.org or contact

CCADV at:
90 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
888-774-2900



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS) is a statewide coalition of independent sexual assault crisis programs, which work together to end sexual violence through victim assistance, community education, and public policy advocacy.

To obtain further information, please visit the CONNSACS website at www.connsacs.org or contact CONNSACS at:

96 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
860-282-9881
Email: info@connsacs.org

**Do you feel that your rights as a crime victim
have been or are being violated?
Do you have questions or concerns
about your rights?**

**CALL the Office of the Victim Advocate
860-550-6632 or visit our website at www.ova.state.ct.us**



The mission of Mothers Against Drunk Driving is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime, and prevent underage drinking.

Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD), is a national non-profit organization, established in 1980. On average every 40 minutes someone is killed by drunk drivers, and 48% of all alcohol consumed by students attending a four-year college is consumed by underage students, this is why MADD has dedicated 25 years to the mission to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and prevent underage drinking.

To find out more information about this organization, please visit their website at www.madd.org/ct/ or contact MADD at:

317 Foxon road
East Haven, CT 06513
203-234-6521
Email: MADDCONN@sbcglobal.net



Survivors of Homicide, Inc. (SOH), was founded in 1983 by a group of families trying to cope with the murder of a loved one. Today, Survivors of Homicide have become advocates for all victims of violent crime. Members of SOH receive free services such as support group meetings, planning & business meetings to further our advocacy, educational goals, member newsletter, and personal advocacy. Additionally, you receive support throughout the judicial process and beyond.

To obtain further information, please visit the Survivors of Homicide website at www.survivorsofhomicide.com or contact SOH at:

530 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 380
Wethersfield, CT 06109
860-257-7388
Email: Survivors@snet.net

SAVE THE DATE



National Police Week

May 9 - 15, 2010

**Events in Washington, DC will be held from
May 13th - May 16th, 2010

For more information, please contact:

Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (C.O.P.S)

1-800-784-COPS (2677)

Email: cops@nationalcops.org

Website: www.nationalcops.org



14th Annual Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference Against Violence June 8th & 9th, 2010

Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050

*"Melanie Rieger: A Daughter, Sister, Friend, College
Student: A Domestic Violence Statistic"*

For Information:

Please call Dr. Sam Rieger at (203) 756-8080
or email SRIEGER243@att.net

Website: www.melanieriegerconference.com

MADD's 24th Annual Appreciation Awards Ceremony

**Honoring Connecticut's
Law Enforcement**

Thursday, June 10, 2010
6:00 pm

State Police Training Academy
285 Preston Avenue
Meriden, CT



For more information call:
203-764-2566



Petit Family Foundation Golf

Monday, June 21, 2010

For more information, please visit
www.petitfamilyfoundation.org



16th Annual MADD Open Golf Tournament

In memory of James & Barbara Inverno

Monday, June 21, 2010
Wallingford Country Club
195 Long Hill Road
Wallingford, CT

Registration begins at 11:00 a.m.
Shotgun start at 12:30 p.m.
Golfer's Fee \$195 per person

Register by June 5, 2010

Contact Paula for more information at 203-764-2569
ext. 302 or paula.dagostino@madd.org

GE 5K Petit

Family Foundation Race



Sunday, July 18, 2010

For more information or to register, please visit:

www.petitfamilyfoundation.org

CONNECTICUT COLD CASE**\$25,000 REWARD****Dawn Delvecchio**

State Police are offering up to a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the 2005 murder of Dawn Delvecchio.

On July 24, 2005, Dawn was reported missing when she apparently failed to return to a home where she and a friend had been house-sitting on Stonybrook Drive in East Haddam, CT. On July 25, 2005 the body of Dawn, a 39 year-old mother of two, was discovered partially hidden within the residence. Her death was ruled a homicide.

The Connecticut State Police frequently relies on the public for help in solving criminal cases such as in Dawn's case.

ANYONE with information about this crime should please contact the Connecticut State Police at 1-800-842-0200.

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*"Never part without loving words to think of
during your absence. It may be that you will not
meet again in this life."*

- Jean Paul Richter