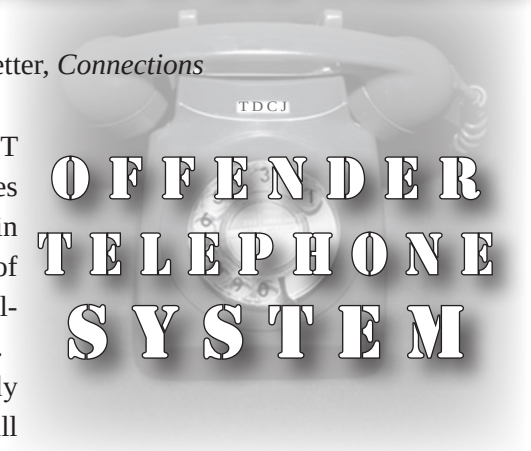
The Victim's Informer

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE VOL.14, N. 2 – JUN/JUL 2009

PAY PHONES FOR OFFENDER USE BEING INSTALLED IN TDCJ FACILITIES

by David Nunnelee
Editor, TDCJ Newsletter, *Connections*



FOR THE FIRST TIME, pay phones are being installed in Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities for offender use. The first of the roughly 6,000 phones that will make up the TDCJ Offender Phone System were installed and activated in late March at the Henley State Jail in Dayton. Others are to be installed at TDCJ facilities through September.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice awarded a contract for the offender telephone system to Embarq of Overland Park, Kansas last August. Its subcontractor, Securus Technologies of Dallas, is responsible for installing the telephones and maintaining the system.

TDCJ's contract with Embarq calls for the state to receive no less than 40 percent of the gross billable revenue from the telephone system. The first $10 million received by the state is to be deposited in the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund. All additional revenue will be divided evenly between that fund and the state's General Revenue fund.

Prior to the installation of the phones, "voice prints" are taken from all offenders eligible to use them. The initial voice biometric recognition enrollment process began in early January and continues into June. More than 77,300 offenders had enrolled through mid-April. Offenders with major disciplinary problems, gang affiliations or on death row will not have access to the telephone system.

In either English or Spanish, the computer software program used in the enrollment process prompts an offender to state his

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TDCJ victim services

Angie McCown	Director
Mark Odom	Deputy Director
Mary Kuenstler	Assistant Deputy Director, Victim Notification
Gene Stewart	Assistant Deputy Director, Programs
Mike Jones	Program Coordinator, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse
Sheri Sikes	Program Coordinator, Victim Impact Panel Program
Jim Brazzil	Program Coordinator, Victim Support & Community Education
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TxCVC

Please Note . . .

Texas law requires that TDCJ-Victim Services Division request readers to notify us annually, in writing, that they wish to continue receiving The Victim's Informer. See page 4 for a convenient subscription form.

Victims to Volunteers

Janice Harris Lord
Texas Board of Criminal Justice Board Member

The month of April brought us both National Crime Victims Rights Week and National Volunteer Month. At the April TDCJ Board Meeting, we honored outstanding volunteers in the system. Here's the rub: TDCJ has 16,311 approved volunteers, but only 385 of them help the Victim Services Division, and most of those are victim speakers with the Bridges to Life Program.

I CAN UNDERSTAND why those interested in volunteering might be drawn more to volunteering in local programs than to a corrections-based state program. Many, victims themselves, may not want anything to do with offenders. That opinion is certainly justified. However, TDCJ-Victim Services is a totally victim-oriented division that can find plenty for a volunteer to do without having direct contact with offenders. There are opportunities to volunteer with both the Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue program and the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse. All you need to do is call TDCJ-Victim Services at 800-848-4284, and ask to speak to someone in either of those programs.

Some of you may feel drawn to tell your story before an audience of offenders. You may be interested in learning more about the Bridges to Life program, which is offered in 24 of our Texas prisons. To participate in this program, you must be able to tell your story from the perspective of your hurt without blaming or accusing your audience. If you live in or near Austin, Beaumont, Bryan, Burnet, Dallas, Dayton, Gatesville, Houston, Huntsville, Lockhart, Navasota, Palestine, San Antonio, Wichita Falls, or Winnsboro, and think you might be interested, you can begin by checking out the website: www.bridgestolife.org This is a faith-based program whose primary mission is to connect communities to the prisons in an effort to reduce recidivism rates with a focus on victim impact programs. Many positive things must come together for offenders to not recidivate, but grasping the impact on the victim may be a significant one of them.

For those not interested in corrections-based victim services programs, please consider volunteering with any victim services agency near you. Many victim services programs throughout Texas receive Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, and thus, are required to use volunteers. These include victim services programs in your local law enforcement agencies, district attorney's office, family violence shelter, rape crisis program, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) chapter, hospital-based victim services program, and many others.

If you are a victim of crime, remember those services and programs that helped you the most. When you feel strong enough to want to give back, please consider contacting them and asking what volunteer opportunities are available. They will help match your strengths with their needs.

"He has achieved success ...
Who has left the world better than he found it ..."

On April 28, 2009, at the National Crime Victims' Rights Week event sponsored by the Midland Victims' Coalition, Pedro M. "Pete" Fierro was honored with the Person in the Legal Field Award for his work with victims at Legal Aid of Northwest Texas. This was his acceptance speech.

ON MAY 11, 1979, MY BROTHER and I were involved in a hit and run accident. It was my birthday and also Mother's Day. He was only a year old. His life had only begun. A few years later, my uncle was shot and killed by his then girlfriend; he left behind three teenage children with no father.

On December 3, 2004, a bus carrying three Denver City Elementary School teachers was hit by a truck driver, killing all three instantly. One of them was my cousin. She left behind a loving husband and two children, one of them still in elementary school.

How do we explain any senseless act to a grieving family? How do we explain it to a young child? What is it like to return to work to find our fellow co-workers and colleagues lost and next door neighbors taken away too soon? How do we help those affected by these acts? And most of all: How do we continue to carry the memory of the victims of any crime? We remind ourselves that they were good providers as mothers and fathers, were loved upon by sisters and brothers and embraced by their community.

It is often said, "That which does not break us, makes us stronger." Others may say, "It can either bring a family closer or tear them apart." While it is best left to be described that, while family and friends are left, there is work that still needs to be done to prevent any senseless act from happening to anyone else, and, with the Victims' Right Ceremony, we continue to remember all victims of crime.

Each of us on any given day reads the newspaper, watches the news on television or takes time away from work to click on the Internet to see what is going on in our world, more specifically in our own back yard and our community.

How blessed we are in Midland to have an active organization at the Midland Victims' Coalition that strives and works to prevent these senseless acts but also protects those left behind.

Our commitment to being a part of the Midland Victim's Coalition is not by name only. Aside from the meetings, we are on the phone with each other, with other agencies, during the work week, after work, late evenings and on weekends. We look at what is going on in our own community, and we hope to educate the public and our clients about their rights.

I wonder to myself what I have done these past few years to warrant this recognition. I accept this award on behalf of Legal Aid and myself but also accept this award on behalf of the mothers who come to our office alone or with children. I have seen the tears in their eyes as they tell me about the abuse they have had to endure and about the physical, mental, emotional and sometimes sexual abuse they have to put up with at the hands of a spouse or boyfriend. And now they find themselves in unfamiliar territory needing help to protect themselves and their children. I look at the eyes of the children, sometimes they are school age, sometimes they are months old and often they are only weeks old. I sit and listen to the stories but can only sit back and wonder what pain they must be going through and what the future holds for them.

I look at the pain and suffering of the elderly, barely making ends meet and who come to our office when they have been taken advantage of by loved ones, have been victimized by unfair business practices and wonder how will they ever get out of this situation. To see them hurt physically, emotionally and financially is something I take personally.

We, as the Midland Victim's Coalition, hear their cries for help and often times, when we call them to let them know we can't help them, we have to explain that it's not THEM, it's often

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THE CLEARINGHOUSE IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE two new staff members who started in April: Stacy Steck is the new Planner; Melanie Richardson is the new Administrative Assistant III. Stacy is responsible for conference planning and organizing the Victim Impact Statement Revision Committee among other duties. Stacy has a criminal justice degree from St. Edward's University in Austin and previously worked for the Attorney General's Office in Law Enforcement Defense, Special Crimes, and Criminal Investigations. Her direct line is 512-406-5922; email her at stacy.steck@tdcj.texas.gov.

Melanie is responsible for maintaining and developing the Victim Assistance Resource Directory among other duties and will serve as the editor of *The Victim's Informer*. Melanie has a organizational communications degree from Texas State University in San Marcos and comes to us from the Executive Clemency section of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Melanie's direct line is 512-406-5931; email her at melanie.richardson@tdcj.texas.gov. We are very glad to have both Stacy and Melanie!

In April, TxCVC staff was honored to participate in and attend several events. First was the Restorative Justice Symposium at the University of Texas School of Law (see article on page 10).

During Crime Victims' Rights Week, we participated in and attended the Travis County ceremony at the State Capitol on April 29th. On April 30th, we attended the Bexar County ceremony along with TDCJ-Victim Services Division hotline phone operators, Sheena Hudson and Dewanda Vaughn. And, on May 2nd, we were a part of the First Annual Crime Victims Awareness Fair in Lancaster.

On May 4th, we had the honor of attending the Texas Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony at the State Capitol. On May 8th, we attended the TDCJ Fallen Officers' Memorial Service at the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville. TDCJ lost two correctional officers in the last two years: Susan Louise Canfield, End of Watch September 24, 2007, and Barbara Leggett Shumante, End of Watch June 13, 2008.

Finally, the 2009 Victim Impact Statement Revision Committee is being finalized. The committee will first meet in June and is comprised of criminal justice professionals from many state agencies including the Office of the Attorney General, TDCJ-Community Justice Assistance Division, Texas Youth Commission, and the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Also on the committee are several victim assistance coordinators representing counties from across the state: from El Paso to Brownsville to Midland. Contact Stacy regarding any questions about the VIS Revision Committee.

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Texas Victim Services Association

by Kelly Willis
TVSA President

WHILE WATCHING the Dallas Mavericks lose their playoff series to the Denver Nuggets I noticed a sign that said, "NBA CARES." This is a slogan for the NBA's charity organization.

To borrow from their slogan, TVSA CARES. TVSA is the Texas Victim Services Association, an association of victim service providers for victim service providers. Our members are victim assistance workers from all fields—law enforcement agencies, domestic violence programs, correctional facilities, district attorney offices, private practice and more.

So how does TVSA CARE?

As an association, TVSA strives to improve the field of victim assistance and services to victims. The more opportunities for learning and growth provided to victim assistance workers, the better services that are available for victims and survivors. How TVSA works to better our field is outlined in our mission of support, education, and recognition for victim service providers.

Support

TVSA created a code of ethics for our members. A code of ethics provides guidance and outlines our responsibilities in providing services.

Perhaps the best means of support offered through any association is networking. Networking occurs at annual conferences, regional trainings, and through our website.

A typical example of networking happened at our last annual conference; a member new to her agency informed me how helpful the TVSA Regional Coordinator was, sharing ideas and introducing other members.

Members also can email questions through our website to gather information about other regions and programs.

Education

TVSA has an annual conference that rotates through cities across the state. **This year TVSA will hold its 11th Annual Conference in El Paso from September 15th through 18th.**

This will be TVSA's first conference in El Paso. El Paso has a great local victim services coalition, a long history of supporting victim rights, and offers many excellent and innovative services for crime victims. Our conferences bring in keynote speakers from around the country, but also focus on services and programs operating throughout Texas. Participants continually rate our conferences with high marks.

In 2008, with leadership from the Governor's Office, TVSA hosted the Texas Academy for Victim Assistance as a collaborative effort of the state's major government and non-profit agencies engaged in victim services. Training occurred for approximately 30 victim services providers new to the field. TVSA and the other agencies and associations recognize the importance of offering training to workers new to the field and will work together in an effort to continue future academies.

Regional training is an area TVSA is expanding. TVSA has six regions and each regional coordinator is working to arrange local trainings for his/her areas.

Recognition

Countless victim service providers demonstrate their hard work and dedication every day, whether members of TVSA, other associations, or not affiliated with a professional group. TVSA typically does not recognize individual accomplishments as much as working for advancement of the field as a whole.

TVSA CARES. Hopefully, this is evident as we carry on our mission of support, education and recognition.

Please visit our website at www.txvsa.org to learn more about TVSA. If you have suggestions on how we can improve, please contact me through the email address on our website or join me in El Paso at our annual conference this coming September.

Eddie Mendoza Retires from State Service

By Mike Jones
TDCJ-Victim Services Division

ON APRIL 30, 2009, Eddie Mendoza, former mediator and state coordinator of the Victim Services Division's Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue Program, officially retired from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

The seventh of fourteen children, Eddie was born in 1954 in the small farming town Ralls, Texas, while his parents were picking cotton in west Texas. Although he grew up in the Rio Grande Valley, as a migrant farm worker, he and his family traveled across Texas and up to the state of Colorado, following the seasonal harvest schedule. In 1976 he enrolled at Pan American University in Edinburg and completed his social work degree in 1980. Eddie later earned a master's degree and is a licensed chemical dependency counselor.

In February 1981 he went to work for Angelina County Adult Probation Department where he began a career in criminal justice that has lasted for 28 years. He was a probation officer from 1981 to 1989 and then went to work for the Texas Adult Probation Commission, which later became TDCJ-Community Justice Assistance Division. He was a trainer for TDCJ-CJAD from 1989 to 1999.

In 1999 he took the job as a mediator at TDCJ-Victim Services Division; in 2001 he became the program coordinator for the VOM/D Program where he continued to develop the program into its current form.

Eddie says his work at Victim Services gave him a better understanding of the criminal justice system, because the victims taught him the impact offenders have on other peoples' lives because of the crimes they commit. He says, "No one can understand the impact of violent crime without understanding the stories of the victims." He decided to leave Victim Services in 2006 and go work at a prison unit, where he could have daily, direct supervision of offenders and share his experience from the stories he heard from victims. Offenders who listen to these stories and try to understand the impact of crime begin to make better choices as they prepare themselves to be released from prison.

His boyhood dreams of traveling to far away places have been fulfilled, and he continues to visit places he could only daydream of as a kid working under the hot sun in the fields. Around the Victim Services Division, Eddie was famous for his frugal habits, his many stories of how he lost his fingertip, his colorful, inspiring stories of growing up in the fields, and his ability to gracefully leap even the tallest fence gates. I, for one, consider it a unique and amazing privilege to have worked with Eddie at Victim Services. His outlook on life, dedication, and family not only tremendously influenced my career but my life as well.

Mark Odom, Deputy Director of Victim Services Divison had this to say about Eddie. "Whether it was whistling, clacking goat hooves together, or burning incense, Eddie had a way of getting your attention. Eddie was able to add his experiences working with offenders and as a trainer for CJAD to the delicate task of working with victims of violent crime. Eddie's vast experience in working with offenders proved essential in the early development of the Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue Program in Texas, and he was invited to other states to train their departments as well."

Eddie would like to thank all the people who made it possible for him to make it to this day, especially his father and mother who have long passed away but still remain very close to his heart.

Although retired, Eddie will continue to work as a probation officer in Orange County, where he will continue to work with offenders and help them try to understand the impact of crime and encourage them to make better choices and become better citizens.

Grief Through the Eyes of Kids

By Yvonne Butler Clark, M.A.

"If a child is old enough to love ... she is old enough to grieve."

HOW DO WE TALK to kids about grief? Our kids today are bombarded with loss and separation. The death of a parent, sibling, or friend; separation from a parent in the military; grandparent parenting; foster care and/or incarceration. Telling a child about the death or separation of a loved one is the beginning rather than the end of a long process of sharing. Children will have many questions and parents, caregivers, teachers and religious leaders will be able to readily answer some of them; some of their questions will be discussed but not answered.

One of the most frequently asked questions about kids and grief is: Should children attend funerals? Definitely. A funeral is a celebration of the life of the deceased. If a child wants to go to the funeral, she should be allowed to attend if she has been equipped with an age-appropriate, detailed explanation of the order of the funeral service. Help the child understand what a funeral or memory service is and the purpose of it.

Step one. Tell the child what to expect, the size of the room, the fact that there may be a lot of flowers, how and where everyone will be sitting, the possibility of outpouring of emotions, where the casket will be and if it will be open or closed. Whether they are preschoolers or teenagers, timid or self-possessed, young persons should be carefully instructed on what they will be seeing. Adults have the role of providing emotional support, but the child should make the decision whether to go to the funeral or not with the understanding that it's OK if she changes her mind and decides not to attend the funeral or needs to leave the church before the service is over.

Tears and sadness are neither a sign of weakness nor lack of faith; they are the price one pays for love. Should a seventeen-year-old male show emotion by crying? Tears are a normal expression of sadness. It is a natural part of grief, and tears help relieve stress. All children grieve on different cognitive and emotional developmental levels. The duration and intensity of grief are unique for each individual. A child younger than four can sense that something is wrong as they experience the grief of a parent or primary caregiver. The absence of the mother may cause a clear biological reaction. Grief of a seven- or eight-year-old may indicate fears of her own death; death is seen as an "attacker" who takes life.

What can adults do to help grieving children and adolescents? That is a good question; a better question is what do grieving children and adolescents need from adults? Give the child or adolescent plenty of time to mourn. It is fine to say nothing at all. Providing a warm silence encourages the child to do the talking. Support the young person to express her feelings of anger, confusion and sadness. If a child were to say I'm hungry, we would not say don't be hungry. Instead, we would ask when was the last time she ate? What does she want to eat? We would acknowledge her hunger while working through the process to decide if she needs a snack or a meal. Allow the child to talk out the various emotions she may be feeling. Show that we believe it is all right to feel anger, sorrow, loneliness, and fear and that we will be glad to listen and talk about each concern as it arises. Validate what the child is feeling. Healthy resolution of grief is validating a child's feelings and helping establish acceptable and proper coping skills, strategies and techniques.

If it is an adult that is grieving also, she should share her own feelings. Communal sorrow reduces isolation. Help the child understand that physical death, in itself, does not hurt. The family is crying because they hurt inside. The sadness comes from the fact that a relationship that meant much to everyone has been lost. Parents and caregivers can help children and adolescents establish appropriate expressions and outlets for grief.

The pain of grief lessens over time, but it's impossible to eradicate it. Grief resolution is not about forgetting, letting go or moving on; rather, it is about learning to remember their loved one in a new way.

Acceptance; *continued from page 3*

limited resources, staff shortage, and budget cuts. But I can stand here and honestly say that we try to help those who come to our offices. Can we help all? No. But every situation is different, and every client has his or her own needs. But I also stress that it hurts, as members of that coalition, when we turn away someone who we may never hear from or see again, and that weighs heavy on our minds and hearts. That is a heavy burden to carry when you work with these clients and applicants and all victims of crime. And we do so not just for the paychecks. Each of us does it out of duty, loyalty, devotion and commitment to make Midland a better place to live.

I have had the opportunity to visit with you members of the coalition and only recently learned what it is like to walk a mile in your shoes. I admire all of you who do the work you do: who man the hub of communications and who get those 911 calls out; officers who respond to domestic disputes and traffic accidents. I admire the officers who put their lives on the line to serve and protect. I admire the work you do to literally walk the client to the court house and to the courtroom, as many of these clients have never set foot in a courtroom. I have seen the time and energy it takes to prepare those emergency protective and restraining orders. I admire many of you who work as defenders of law and justice as attorneys and prosecutors. I admire the work you do to act as community and justice liaisons and court-appointed special advocates. I commend the work you do: to be called out in the middle of the night and to rush to the side of an applicant at the hospital after a vicious crime. I respect the work you do: to counsel the many after the events, to bring some sense of healing and closure, and to put smiles on the faces at Christmas time with toy drives. To those of you who protect and investigate the young and elderly, not out of spite but to protect them from abuse and neglect, speaks volumes of the work you do. To those of you who gather all of this and provide–*and provide round the clock*–referrals to someone else at any given time is commendable. To those of you who take in these women and children and provide a temporary roof or permanent residence by allowing working mothers to work or stay-at-home moms go back to school and get an education speaks to the great work each of you do. And last, I have visited with the last of you who are that voice of a lost loved one taken away too soon but am reminded that you are that voice, their voice.

So I stand here and accept this award because of the work you do, each of you deserves this as much as I do. To my staff at Legal Aid–Todd, Lisa and Nancy–who remind me why I come to work. To members of the judiciary, the private (pro bono) attorneys, the MCBA and the MCYLA, paralegals and legal secretaries and the other countless numbers of volunteers who help me year after year and members of the PBAB, I am only one person. To my family, who do not quite understand my heavy burden at times.

I don't think I set out to save the world, but with this award will show I hope that my life had some meaning in preventing another crime and protecting another victim.

Pete Fierro graduated from Sul Ross State University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. He has been employed at Legal Aid of Northwest Texas as the Equal Justice Volunteer Coordinator since 2003. He is editor of the LANWT- EJVP newsletter, *Newsmakers*. He is the current President-Elect of National Association of Pro Bono Professionals (NAPB Pro) Executive Committee Board. He serves as Vice-President of the Stanton Community Service Organization and sits on the Casa de Amigos Social Agency Board and serves as Secretary of the Midland County Victim Coalition Board.

"No one can tell what goes on between the person you were and the person you become. No one can chart that blue and lonely section of hell. There are no maps of the change. You just come out on the other side … or you don't."
Stephen King from *The Stand*

The 2009 Crime Victim Services Conference will be held November 19-21, 2009, at the Renaissance Austin Hotel.

Conference registration will open online September 1, 2009

Discover what is on the horizon in victim services for Texas and the nation. Join us in learning new skills, improving existing services and working toward a brighter horizon for victims and their families. Come share your challenges, your solutions and your vision as you network during Texas' largest multidisciplinary victim services conference.

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

THE CRIME VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION of the Attorney General's Office provides training to victim advocates, victim coordinators and liaisons, law enforcement, non-profit organizations and professional service providers to ensure that victims receive every assistance in accessing the Crime Victims' Compensation Program (CVC) and Address Confidentiality Program (ACP). Please visit the Crime Victim Services Division Training Web page at www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/victim_train.shtml to review upcoming training opportunities and to register online for Presumptive Eligibility and Advanced Track training.

The Address Confidentiality Program is currently conducting training sessions in the Austin area for advocates who assist victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. By statute, victims must first meet with local advocates to apply for the ACP program. Advocates must receive training before helping victims apply. To arrange Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) training sessions via phone or to come to a training in Austin, contact the ACP hotline, Monday through Friday, 8-5pm, 888-832-2322.

The Crime Victim Services Division Biennial Conference, Horizons, will be held November 19-21 in Austin at the Renaissance Arboretum Hotel. Discover what is on the horizon in victim services for Texas and the nation. Join us in learning new skills, improving existing services and working toward a brighter horizon for victims and their families. Come share your challenges, your solutions and your vision as you network during Texas' largest multidisciplinary victim services conference. Conference registration will open online on September 1, 2009.

Panel discusses Restorative Justice at UT Symposium

by Melanie Richardson
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

Ronnie Earle, John Sage, and Mark Odom

DR. MARILYN ARMOUR, an associate professor of social work at The University of Texas at Austin, delivered the keynote presentation on restorative justice at the Ninth Annual Spring Symposium on Dispute Resolution on Thursday, April 23rd. In addition to the keynote presentation, the symposium featured panelists Mark Odom, TDCJ-Victim Services Division; John Sage, Bridges to Life; and Ronnie Earle, former Travis County District Attorney.

"As a society, we are in desperate need of a different approach to the problems created by crime and social injustices," said Dr. Armour, "an approach that puts energy into the future, not into what is past, an approach that begins with who has been hurt and what they need and finishes with giving offenders a way back instead of guaranteeing them a lifetime of indeterminate hardship. Such an approach requires restorative solutions that engage those who are harmed, wrongdoers, and their affected communities in a search for mutually beneficial solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships."

The panelists discussed current restorative justice programs at work in Texas such as Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue (VOM/D), Bridges to Life and the Travis County, Texas Community Justice Accountability Sentencing (CJAS) Initiative or circle sentencing.

VOM/D is a restorative justice program that originated in Texas in 1995 and today serves as a national model to over 22 states that have implemented the same or similar programs. Mark Odom said, "The VOM/D program in Texas is the largest in the country, having completed 234 face-to-face dialogues with victims and offenders of serious and violent crime." In Texas, the VOM/D process can only be initiated by the victim. For the offender, the process is purely voluntary, and, in order to participate, the offender must accept responsibility and express remorse for the crime. It does not become a part of the offender's file, so it has no bearing on the offender's classification or parole status. Odom said, "It was an honor to be asked to participate in this symposium. For those who choose to study and work in the field of law or social services it is important to recognize the value of victim-centered programs such as the Victim/Offender Mediation and Dialogue program. Victim involvement is an essential component to restorative justice."

Bridges To Life brings together unrelated victims and inmates to help the inmates understand how crime affects others and to empower crime victims by telling their "stories" of victimization. By participating in face-to-face sessions inside the prison, both victims and offenders participate in a restorative justice process. John Sage said, "It was an honor to participate as a panelist in the Symposium at the UT Law School. I am so pleased about the emphasis on restorative justice and the collaboration of the UT Law School and the School of Social Work to embrace this important subject."

The Travis County CJAS Initiative is a partnership between the District Attorney's Office and the Crime Prevention Institute. It is a community-based restorative justice model. Circles are practiced for some kinds of nonviolent

property crimes that have an impact on the community, such as drug dealing and criminal mischief. "Travis County has been using circle sentencing for approximately 10 years for non-violent crimes." Ronnie Earle said, "People learn to act from their community not by reading law books."

"In closing," Dr. Armour said, "I would suggest that the current criminal justice system is necessary but not sufficient. It needs restorative justice as a social corrective for responding to victimization and the harms of crime. It needs a partner who can advance a fuller sense of justice for participants and call upon public participation and active citizenry to share the responsibility for both the process and outcome."

The symposium was hosted by the Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution at the University of Texas School of Law and sponsored by the Construction Law and the Alternative Dispute Resolution sections of the State Bar of Texas.

For more information, contact: Mary Gaski at the Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution at 512-471-3507.

To learn more about Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue, Victim Impact Panels, or any other TDCJ-Victim Services Division program, contact us at 800-848-4284 or victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov

Phones; *continued from front page*

or her full name four times into a telephone handset and then once again to verify the name. Offenders are then required to designate the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as their "facility" by repeating the agency name in full four times. Individual unit names are not used since offenders are oftentimes transferred from one unit to another during their periods of incarceration.

The pay phones are being installed in day rooms or other common areas at a ratio no greater than 30 eligible offenders per telephone. At Henley, 27 phones were installed, three phones for every 64-bed pod at the facility.

"I like being able to call home," said Christie McNamara, who was the first TDCJ offender in the state to make a prepaid or collect call on the system when she dialed her husband in Bridge City from the Henley facility on March 30. "We have a daughter and we're trying to make wedding plans. We have been doing it by mail, but now we can do it over the phone."

McNamara said she'd probably be calling her husband from Henley three times a week. Six other offenders at Henley made calls to family members or friends the first day the phones were operational.

To receive calls, offender family members or friends can register online at texasprisonphone.com or call Embarq at 866-806-7804. The owner of the telephone number must be listed on the offender's visitors list and his or her name must also match the name on the registrant's driver's license or state identification card. That information must also be reflected on their telephone listing or bill.

Further, receiver registrants must confirm that they are the registered owner of the telephone number and are not registering a wireless number. They must agree to allow the offender to call the phone number and be willing to accept financial responsibility for collect calls. Registrants must also be at least 18 years old and confirm that they will not forward calls or make a 3-way call received from an offender.

"Overall, I think it's going to be a good thing," Region III Director Brian Rodeen said about the phone system after seeing it demonstrated at Henley. "The more contact the offenders can have with their families and friends, the better goes their rehabilitation. Being involved with their families or in establishing outside relationships, whether by phone or by writing, helps them with their transition once they are released. So I think it's going to be a plus, especially for our treatment facilities."

To make a call, an offender first enters the number being dialed on a keypad, followed by his or her TDCJ number, which serves as a Personal Identification Number or PIN. Offenders then verify their name by saying it in the same manner it was recorded during enrollment, then saying "Texas Department of Criminal Justice." Of-

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fenders are limited to calling only those friends or family members who appear on their approved visitor lists. Crime victims and their families can block offender calls by registering with Victim Services, and all calls, except to an offender's attorney of record, are subject to monitoring and recording.

TDCJ Inspector General John Moriarty said the Legislature has given his office 30 investigator and criminal intelligence analyst positions in order to effectively deal with the telephone system.

"We're able to monitor any offender phone call made from any of the 112 units throughout the system in one single location," Moriarty said. "There's going to be targeted monitoring of certain offenders and there's going to be some random monitoring also. This is in addition to any monitoring that unit correctional staff may conduct. We've done a great deal of research on the monitoring systems that are available and we believe that we have the finest investigative package in the country."

Only after an offender's name, PIN and the number dialed have been verified will a call go through. Offenders are allowed up to 120 minutes of phone time a month, with no one call lasting more than 15 minutes. The pay phones are available to offenders between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. unless conditions dictate a change.

Two types of accounts are available. Prepaid rates with an Offender Account are fixed at 23 cents per minute in-state and 39 cents out-of-state. With the Friends & Family Account, collect and prepaid calls placed within Texas cost 26 cents per minute, while out-of-state collect calls are billed at a rate of 43 cents per minute. No international calls or calls to cell phones are allowed.

Additional TDCJ facilities will be equipped with pay phones throughout the summer months.

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