THE
VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE VOL.15, NO. 1 – MAR/APR 2010

Working with Undocumented Victims of Crime

By Rosie Mendoza, M.Ed.
Victims Assistance Coordinator/Unit Supervisor
Cameron County District Attorney's Office

As victim service providers near the Mexican Border, we face many challenges daily, trying to assist victims of violent crime. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in this field is trying to assist a reluctant victim because of his/her legal status. In the Rio Grande Valley, the majority of the population is Hispanic. In the Cameron County District Attorney's Office Crime Victims Unit, we service an influx of undocumented victims on a daily basis. These undocumented victims are reluctant to proceed with criminal charges for many reasons, some of which are fear of deportation, fear of retaliation, lack of a support system, and financial reasons.

When a victim of violent crime seeks services from the crime victims division and domestic violence unit, questions about their legal status are not asked. However, this is a major concern with many of our victims, especially those victims seeking protective orders for domestic violence and child abuse cases. In many cases, victims of domestic violence and child sexual abuse are threatened by the defendant that if they report the abuse to the authorities their children will be taken away and they will be deported. This is a fear that has been deeply engrained in these victims by their offender. In these situations we look to our partner agencies to assist us in addressing undocumented victims' legal status. We work closely with Proyecto Libertad which is a non-profit organization that specializes in assisting individuals with legal status issues. Because Proyecto Libertad and other agencies like it are located in Harlingen, transportation issues pose a major problem for many victims since most live in rural areas. Faced with these circumstances, we refer our victims to local domestic violence and sexual assault shelters who provide emergency assistance. They, in turn, schedule an appointment with these victims and ensure transportation

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Trabajando con Víctimas Indocumentadas del Crimen

Por Rosie Mendoza, M.Ed.
Directora de Servicios para Víctimas
El Condado de Cameron Fiscalia de Distrito del Crimen

Como proveedores de servicios de la víctima cercanos a la frontera mexicana, nos enfrentamos diariamente con muchos desafíos, intentando ayudar a las víctimas del crimen violento. Tal vez uno de los retos más grandes en este campo es el tratar de ayudar a una víctima renuente debido a su estatus legal. En el Valle del Rio Grande, la mayoría de la población es hispana. En la Unidad de las Víctimas del Crimen de la Oficina del Fiscal del Condado de Cameron, servimos a una afluencia de víctimas indocumentadas en una base diaria. Estas víctimas son renuentes a proceder con los cargos penales por muchas razones, algunas de las cuales son la deportación, miedo a represalias, la falta de un sistema de apoyo, y razones financieras.

Cuando una víctima de un crimen violento busca servicios de la división de las víctimas del crimen violento y de la unidad de violencia doméstica, no se hacen preguntas sobre su estatus legal. Sin embargo, esto es una gran preocupación con muchas de nuestras víctimas, especialmente aquellas víctimas en busca de órdenes de protección por violencia doméstica y casos de abuso infantil. En muchos casos, las víctimas de la violencia doméstica y de abuso sexual de niños se ven amenazadas por el demandado que si reportan el abuso a las autoridades los niños se les seran arrebatados y seran deportados. Esto es un temor que ha sido profundamente arraigado en estas víctimas por su agresor. En estas situaciones nosotros recurrimos a nuestras agencias asociadas para que nos ayude a encarar el estatus legal de las víctimas indocumentadas. Trabajamos cercanamente con Proyecto Libertad el cual es una organización no lucrativa que se especializa en ayudar a individuos con cuestiones de estatus legal. Debido a que Proyecto Libertad y otras agencias como tal estan ubicadas en Harlingen, cuestiones de transporte posan un gran problema para muchas de las víctí-

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and necessary paperwork is available to them. Friendship of Women, which is located in Brownsville, assists our victims in southern Cameron County while the Family Crisis Center services our victims in northern Cameron County. Both of these shelters also work closely with Proyecto Libertad to aid victims of violent crime with legal status matters. Our assistant district attorneys and advocates assist victims in completing Uvisa forms. As victim advocates, we aim to empower and encourage our victims to follow through with legal status matters.

When you become a victim of a violent crime your sense of safety is altered! Your life, as you once knew it, changes forever. Nevertheless, you can regain your trust in people and have a sense of safety again, but it doesn't happen overnight. Many of our victims, including undocumented victims, have mistrust issues. This is why establishing and maintaining rapport with victims is vital. Think about it, you're in a foreign country illegally and suddenly you become a victim of a crime. You're faced with many barriers, perhaps the largest one is not knowing how to speak the language. Many of these victims don't know who to turn to for help. During a time of crisis we need someone to lean on to help us through our struggles. Unfortunately, many of our victims don't have a support system typically because their loved ones reside in another country. When a victim seeks services from our office we assess what type of support system they have, if any. If we discover they don't have a support system, we link them to resources immediately. We find more often than not that we become these victims' primary support system. Placing follow up calls and making home visits to these victims is fundamental. Keeping them actively involved and informed about the criminal justice system keeps them engaged. Let's face it, without a victim we don't have a case. Our goal is to help the victims through their journey from being a victim to becoming survivors so that they can become good witnesses. So that ultimately, justice can prevail!

In our community, we strive to educate the public about community resources and how to access these services. Annually, during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the Cameron County District Attorney's Office Crime Victims Unit hosts a Crime Victims' Expo. This Expo is an opportunity for community agencies to disseminate program information to the community. During this event we provide door prizes, food, music, and a small ceremony honoring victims of crime. It's amazing how many outcries we receive from the public during this event.

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mas ya que muchas de ellas viven en zonas rurales. Frente a estas circunstancias, referimos a nuestras víctimas a refugios locales de violencia doméstica y de asalto sexual, los cuales proporcionan asistencia de emergencia. Ellos, por su parte, una cita con estas víctimas, y garantizan transporte, y la documentación necesaria esta disponible para ellos. Amistad de la Mujer (Friendship of Women), que se encuentra en Brownsville, ayuda a nuestras víctimas en el sur del Condado de Cameron mientras que el Centro de Crisis de Familia (Family Crisis Center) le da servicio a nuestras víctimas en el norte del Condado de Cameron. Ambos de estos refugios también trabajan estrechamente con Proyecto Libertad para ayudar a las víctimas del crimen violento con cuestiones de estatus legal. Nuestros asistentes de fiscal del distrito y defensores asisten a las victimas a completar los formularios Uvisa. Como defensores de las víctimas, nuestro objetivo es fortalecer y alentar a nuestras víctimas a seguir adelante con asuntos de estatus legal.

¡Cuando usted se convierte en una víctima del crimen violento su sentido de seguridad se altera! Su vida, como alguna vez la conoció, cambia para siempre. Sin embargo, puede recuperar su confianza en la gente y tener una sensación de seguridad de nuevo, pero no sucede de la noche a la mañana. Muchas de nuestras víctimas, incluyendo las víctimas indocumentadas, tienen problemas de desconfianza. Esto es por el cual establecer y sostener un buen entendimiento con nuestras víctimas es vital. Pienselo, está ilegalmente en un país extranjero y de pronto usted se convierte en una víctima de un crimen. Se enfrenta con numerosos obstáculos, tal vez el más grande es el no saber como hablar el ídioma. Muchas de estas víctimas no saben a quién recurrir para obtener ayuda. Durante un momento de crisis necesitamos a alguien en quién apoyarnos para que nos ayude a través de nuestras luchas. Lamentablemente, muchas de nuestras víctimas no tienen un sistema de apoyo generalmente debido a que sus seres queridos residen en otro país. Cuando una víctima solicita servicios de nuestra oficina, nosotros evaluamos que tipo de sistema de apoyo tienen ellos, si alguno. Si descubrimos que ellos no tienen un sistema de apoyo, nosotros inmediatamente los enlazamos con recursos. Encontramos que más que nunca nos convertimos en el sistema de apoyo primordial de estas víctimas. El hacer llamadas de seguimiento y visitas a domicilio a estas víctimas es fundamental. Mantenerlos activamente involucrados e informados sobre el sistema penal de justicia los mantiene comprometidos. Enfrentemoslo, sin una víctima no tenemos un caso. Nuestra meta es ayudar a las víctimas a través de su trayectoria de ser una

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VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice Process

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is excited to offer free training to your local and surrounding counties. We want to extend a personal invitation to you and others in your agency to attend a specialized training on Victim Impact Statements (VIS).

This training entitled, "Victim Impact Statements–The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice Process," has been developed exclusively for those individuals and agencies who bear a legal responsibility regarding the handling of Victim Impact Statements. The target audience is all victim assistance coordinators, prosecutors, judges, district clerks, court coordinators, probation officers, law enforcement personnel and sheriff's department staff who prepare pen packets, the set of documents such as the judgment and sentence that accompany offenders to TDCJ-Correctional Institutions Division.

One of the most important victim rights is the right to submit a VIS and have it considered by key decision makers in the criminal justice system. In addition to providing valuable victim impact information, the VIS also serves as a springboard for ensuring victims are afforded other important rights.

"Victim Impact Statements–The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice Process," will focus on the importance of the VIS at key stages of the criminal justice process. It will discuss the legal responsibilities of the various agencies affected by VIS laws and will offer ideas for shoring up gaps that may exist between agencies.

Please join us for this important training. By working collectively, we can better ensure that the voices of victims in Texas are heard and they are given the respect they deserve.

What You Will Gain From This Training:

- Increased knowledge of the important role the Victim Impact Statement plays at key stages of the criminal justice process;
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the statutory responsibilities of the various criminal justice entities with regard to Victim Impact Statements;
- Familiarity with the revisions to the Victim Impact Statement forms and statistical reporting requirements; and
- Ideas for developing VIS standards in your community that will help to insure victims' voices are heard at all stages of the criminal justice process.

Who Should Attend?

Victim assistance and criminal justice professionals with statutory responsibilities for the handling of victim impact statements including: victim assistance coordinators in district and county attorneys' offices, prosecutors, court coordinators, district clerks, judges, probation officers, law enforcement personnel and sheriff's department staff who are responsible for transporting pen packets to TDCJ.

UPCOMING TRAINING DATES AND VENUES:

3/10/2010	Harlingen	8:30 am - 12:00 pm
3/11/2010	Corpus Christi	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
3/18/2010	Tyler	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
3/18/2010	Ft. Worth	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
3/30/2010	Angleton	8:30 am - 12:00 pm

To learn more about Victim Impact Statement training, contact Kristi Heiman at 512-406-5916 or Janice Sager at 936-437-4942.

To Speak or Not to Speak with the Media: *That is the Question*

Janice Harris Lord
Texas Board of Criminal Justice Board Member

Sometime after *The Cosby Show* got too boring for Americans, television networks took a gamble and developed dozens of programs to assure that the public's fascination with violence, crime, and high drama became an accepted part of our national identity. It worked. Crime is now a key feature of every media outlet. However, the emphasis has not been all bad. Many would argue that it has also served victims of crime well, as their plight grabs the hearts of viewers time after time.

A dilemma presents itself, however, when local news stations, competing with programmatic melodrama for viewers' attention, want to interview victims at any point on a continuum that begins at the crime scene and doesn't end until the offender is released from prison or executed. Occasionally, long-term follow up stories are written, usually with a request for a victim statement or full interview. Crime victims are too often exploited by the press and, as a result, the field of crime victim services often views the media with suspicion, even as the enemy. Yet, if we universally ignore or avoid journalists and producers, we miss powerful opportunities to get our message out to the public. We must appreciate the full potential of media, extending both criticism and praise as earned.

Victim advocates are frequently called upon to help victims decide about speaking with the media. They must be conscious of their own predispositions and prejudices and avoid making assumptions about what victims want and do not want. The decision is about the victim, not the advocate. To illustrate, several years ago, I was asked to serve as both victim advocate and media representative for a family in a high profile case involving the murder of their daughter. They did not want media contacts at their home, and they did not want to give statements to the media before or during the trial. Our strategy to assure this was simple, and one that any victim advocate can achieve, with permission of the advocate's agency. The family put a message on their phone stating that all media inquiries were to be directed to my phone number. The family members did not pick up the phone, but allowed it to record messages. I took all the media calls, wrote down what they wanted, and contacted the family once each day to discuss with them whether or not they wanted to respond to any of the inquiries. We decided that after the trial, they would offer a press conference, but speak to no media until then. As I returned the calls to the media entities, I was able to offer them the press conference in return for their leaving the victims alone for the time being. The request was honored. During the trial, I picked up the family each morning in my vehicle, we traveled to the courthouse using a different route each day, and we parked in a secured private parking spot behind the courthouse. The plan worked beautifully. A significant press conference after the trial offered what the media wanted, and the family decided to grant one national television interview (the *Larry King Show*) and one local newspaper interview (the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*).

Victim advocates routinely prepare victims for the criminal justice process, predicting what may happen based on choices they make about being present in the courtroom during potentially upsetting testimony and presenting an oral victim impact statement. Likewise, advocates should prepare victims for the possible consequences of media attention, allowing them to decide what is in their own best interests.

Following are a few tips about interviews with the media from a publication I worked on a few years ago with the National Center for Victims of Crime called Privacy and

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Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles:
Victim Resources within Reach

Jackie DeNoyelles
Texas Board of Pardons and Parole Board Member

As the Point Person for Victim Related Issues for the Parole Board, I am honored to have been asked to contribute to the Victim's Informer newsletter. Working with the dedicated staff at Victim Services Division and Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, for the past five years, has been very rewarding as we develop ways to assure that victims have a voice in the parole process.

Since the Dec 2009/Jan 2010 edition explained the difference between a Parole Board Member and a Commissioner, I thought I should continue by introducing all nineteen voting members.

For more detailed information on each member, and a variety of information regarding parole matters, you may go to tdcj.texas.gov/BPP.

Persons wishing to comment on parole actions, procedures, case handling or any other matters should submit their concerns to:

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
P.O. Box 13401, Capitol Station
Austin, TX. 78711

Mr. Tim McDonnell is Director of Administration for the Board.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles is committed to the protection of the public, the rights of the victims and to the fair and individual assessment of each offender. Future articles will explain the parole process with particular emphasis on matters of concern to victims.

AMARILLO BOARD OFFICE

5809 South Western, Ste 237
Amarillo, Texas 79110
Phone: 806-359-7656
Fax: 806-358-6455

Charles Aycock - Board Member
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1300 11th St, Ste 520
Huntsville, Texas 77340
Phone: 936-291-2161
Fax: 936-891-8367

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Gatesville, Texas 76528
Phone: 254-865-8870
Fax: 254-865-2629

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2902 N.E. Loop 410, Ste 206
San Antonio, Texas 78218
Phone: 210-564-3721
Fax: 210-564-3726

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ANGLETON BOARD OFFICE

1212 N. Velasco, Ste 201
Angleton, Texas 77515
Phone: 979-849-3031
Fax: 979-849-8741

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PALESTINE BOARD OFFICE

207 E. Reagan Street
Palestine, Texas 75801
Phone: 903-723-1068
Fax: 903-723-1441

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VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATORS
at your side . . .

Over the last few editions of The Victim's Informer, we've made some significant changes. We hope you like them and that they are useful for you. We are soliciting more original articles than ever before on relevant topics, and we are dedicating a lot more space for regular columns from professionals in victim advocacy. For some time we have received articles from Janice Harris Lord, Victim Representative on the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. This issue we have the first article submitted by Jackie DeNoyelles, Victim Representative on the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. For this column, reserved for Victim Assistance Coordinators from around the state, we had our first submission last issue from Jill Hargrove, VAC in Bell County. We have two articles for this issue: one from Serena Hooper, Andrews County VAC and Cindy Jahn, longtime Bexar County VAC. The topic chosen for this issue deals with problems and challenges faced by VACs around the state. Serena has written about the challenges faced by smaller counties; Cindy's piece relates to those faced by the big ones. If you are a VAC and would like to submit an article, please call or email Lauren Reynolds at 512-406-5931 or tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov

Challenges for VACs in Smaller Counties

by Serena Hooper
Victim Assistance Coordinator
Andrews County District Attorney's Office

I was asked to write an article outlining some of the challenges that Victim Assistant Coordinators in smaller counties may face. As I began to outline some of the negative issues, I quickly found that I have many positive experiences as well. I encourage all VACs, whether you work for a large county or small county, to focus on the positives that you are able to achieve and make it a goal to tackle the negatives one at a time.

One of the largest challenges I face in my position is a lack of resources. There are a lot of agencies out there to help; however, I am at times faced with the lack of means to access these resources. Creative networking has come in handy. It is very important to learn about the resources in your community. For example, find out who is in charge of indigent care at your local hospital. Does your community have a Chapter of the Lions Club that helps with eyeglasses? Which churches have food pantries or clothes closets? Do you have the proper paperwork to send in for witness reimbursement? Remember your victim may also be a witness, and they may qualify with one agency and not another. Is there a local charitable organization that donates to families in emergency situations in your community? Your Chamber of Commerce has a list of business and organizations in your community that will be useful.

> One of the largest challenges I face ... is a lack of resources.

Another challenge I face is that my community does not have a women's shelter. The closest one is 40 miles away. Now, you may say, "40 miles away; that is nothing." But many times it is the deciding factor whether a woman will go. The majority of them will not leave Andrews to go to the shelter, because they have children in the public school system and they may have a job here. This is something I don't anticipate changing until a shelter is open in our town.

A third challenge I face is the amount of staff in my office. Our office is an office of five. There is the district/county attorney, assistant county attorney, office secretary, felony paralegal, and me: the misdemeanor paralegal, VAC, Witness Coordinator, and member of the CPT team/Forfeiture and Seizure. Andrews County and the District Attorney's Office is the only department in the county that has a Victim Assistant Coordinator or Victim Advocate. So, not only am I trying to keep up with all the victims in Andrews County, I am trying to keep up with all the misdemeanor duties and

anything else that comes my way. We are a busy office and have begun to see the importance of cross training and keeping everyone updated on what is going on with each of our positions. I am unable to keep everyone up to date on all victims, but everyone is aware of where the files are kept and how to contact me at all times.

As I stated in the beginning there are a lot of positives to my job. The biggest is knowing that in some way I may have helped someone maneuver through our extremely confusing criminal justice system during a very tough time in her life.

. . . and in Large Counties

by Cindy Jahn
Victim Assistance Coordinator
Bexar County District Attorney's Office

As I sat and pondered the task before me, to write a short article about running a victim service program in a large-size DA's office, I thought, "no sweat." There are plenty of issues and problems that big offices face. I wanted to tell the whole story, so I decided to gather information from those, who like me, know what it's like to work in a large DA's office. I immediately turned to "The Big 5. My sisters in crime!" I emailed Michelle [Permenter], Chris [Jenkins], Blanca [Burciaga] and Ellen [Halbert], the Victim Assistance Coordinators from Harris, Dallas, Tarrant and Travis Counties. We talk almost weekly, either by phone or email. It seems like there is always something we need input on and we lean heavily on each other's experiences. It just makes sense. Whose advice would you trust more than those that work with the same trials and tribulations as yourself? As they began to reply to my request for ideas, one issue seemed to bubble to the surface.

How do we deal with so many cases—literally tens of thousands of cases and victims every year? As a VAC, I must decide just what and how many services we can provide to our victims. As a large office, we realize that because we handle so many cases it is impossible for us to provide the personalized victim services as a smaller office. We have to prioritize. First we look to meet the mandated statutory requirements, and then decide how thinly we can spread ourselves while trying to meet the needs of our prosecutors and those of our victims. And of course we do this all while dealing with budget constraints that threaten to take away any of our valuable assets.

Also, we must constantly juggle our own daily duties, those of offering direct victim services and the seemingly endless administrative tasks that must be handled. As the director of victim services for the Bexar County DA's Office I supervise a large staff. We currently have thirty-six victim advocates and an office assistant, plus three more advocates on the way via grant monies. I am tasked with writing and managing grants as well as planning and participating in public awareness events throughout the year. I represent the office in a myriad of local and state groups, coalitions, and boards. And since I don't carry a specific case load, I'm the person that usually helps to fill-in when an advocate is out for any extended period of time.

How do we deal with so many cases?

Admittedly, I can see how this is probably not much different than in a small office with the single VAC who must "wear many hats." Actually when you think about it, running a victim assistance program in both a large and small office is not all that different. Who doesn't experience these issues: 1) manpower–too many cases for too few staff; 2) budget issues–where am I going to get the money to do that; 3) keeping up with what victim resources are available in my county; and 4) working to increase cooperation and communication with the many agencies and organizations we work with? I haven't even mentioned the victims. The daily task of walking them through the criminal justice system and working to meet their most urgent needs is an issue common to us all. Maybe the reality is that all offices are really quite similar, no matter what size they are.

I'm sure it's probably the same in other counties as in ours; the past few years of economic recession have not been kind to our county budget. Last year we faced major cutbacks, therefore, we find ourselves trying to accomplish the same tasks with fewer people and no pay increase. Unfortunately, "word on the street" is that next year's budget cycle won't be any better. As I see it, we have two choices; we must either reserve a nice padded room to relax in or find someone to reach out to. My suggestion is get yourself a Big 5 and realize that strength comes in numbers. We need to utilize the talents of others and rely on our allies to survive. I don't

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STANDING WITH THOSE WHO SERVED

by Mike Jones

Patriot Guard Riders forming the Flag Line at North Fort Hood, November 10, 2009

To learn more about the Patriot Guard Riders visit their website at www.patriotguard.org. There are also several chapters located around Texas as well.

November 5, 2009 was the day thirteen soldiers and civilians were gunned down at Fort Hood. It was a horrible day for the Fort Hood community as well as the entire Killeen area. A few weeks before I had looked into joining the Central Texas Patriot Guard Riders.

Awhile back, I remember seeing a large group of bikers following a funeral procession along US Highway 183 in Austin. I will never forget the sound of all those motorcycles, maybe 60 or 70 or more. The riders were wearing their leathers decked out with all kinds of military insignia. Most all of the bikes had US flags of all sizes attached, flapping as the group rumbled down the highway. I started trying to find out who they were and what was going on.

I was aware that there was a group who had begun protesting at funerals of US veterans. Many of those veterans had been killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The PGR is formed

In early August 2005 the American Legion Riders Chapter 136 from Kansas learned that this group was going to protest at the funeral of a US veteran from Oklahoma. They mustered a number of riders to make the trip for the funeral, and so provided separation between the family and the protestors. Soon after that, they decided to try to get veterans and motorcycle organizations involved in every state, so that riders from each state could handle similar situations. In October 2005 the Patriot Guard name was established and was announced to the 100 plus motorcyclists present at the funeral of another fallen soldier from Tonganoxie, Kansas.

Following missions in South Haven, Kansas and Edmond, Oklahoma, the group decided to do more than just ride. They made plans to get strong nationwide communications and recruiting programs in place. Working from the experiences, suggestions, and encouragement of the American Legion Riders, the Patriot Guard Riders was established and a nationwide campaign to garner support began.

My first mission

A few days after the tragedy at Fort Hood, I got an email from the Central Texas Patriot Guard Riders. They were mustering riders for a mission that day at North Fort Hood. As I often do, I rode my Harley-Davidson to work that day, and my work schedule allowed me to take off. Since I had only recently looked into joining PGR, I was a little nervous. I'm not a veteran, and most of the Patriot Guard Riders are. I replied to the email to tell the Ride Captain that I was available and to ask what I needed to bring. He told me that all I needed was, "my heart in the right place."

It was November 10th, the day of the memorial service at Fort Hood. The

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UNDOCUMENTED; *cont'd from page 3*

Help me help you! This is a message we convey to all our victims including undocumented victims. It is very challenging engaging undocumented victims, especially those that are dependent on the offender to meet their basic needs. Many times, undocumented victims believe they have to endure the violence because they are financially dependent on the offender. This oppression keeps them trapped in a cycle of violence. In these situations we provide financial assistance to victims of crime via Crime Victims' Compensation Fund. When this assistance doesn't suffice, we look to our community resources for assistance. Additionally, we also reach out to other community resources for monetary assistance like the DA Sword & Shield, a civic organization founded by Cameron County District Attorney Armando R. Villalobos. This organization assists victims of violent crime with monetary expenses once all community resources have been exhausted. Cooperatively, as a community, we have continued to be successful in aiding victims of violent crime regardless of their legal status because of the dedication and collaboration of all partner agencies. In the end, our goal is to service ALL victims with dignity and respect!

INDOCUMENTADAS; *continar de página 3*

víctima a convertirse en sobrevivientes para que puedan convertirse en buenos testigos. ¡Para que en última instancia, la justicia pueda prevalecer!

En nuestra comunidad, nos esforzamos por educar al público sobre los recursos de la comunidad y cómo acceder a estos servicios. Cada año, durante la Semana Nacional de los Derechos de las Víctimas del Crimen, la Unidad de las Víctimas del Crimen de la Oficina del Fiscal del Condado de Cameron anfitriona una Expo de las Víctimas del Crimen. Esta Expo es una oportunidad para las agencias de la comunidad para difundir información sobre el programa a la comunidad. Durante este evento proveemos premios en la puerta, comida, música, y una pequeña ceremonia en honor a las víctimas del crimen. La cantidad de protestas que recibimos del público durante este evento es asombrante.

¡Ayúdame a ayúdarte! Este es un mensaje que transmitimos a todas nuestras víctimas incluyendo a las víctimas indocumentadas. Es muy desafiante involucrar a víctimas indocumentadas, especialemente a aquellas que son dependientes del delincuente para satisfacer sus necesidades básicas. Muchas veces, las víctimas indocumentadas creen que tienen que soportar la violencia porque son económicamente dependientes del delincuente. Esta opresión los mantiene atrapados en un ciclo de violencia. En estas situaciones nosotros proveemos asistencia financiera a las víctimas del crimen a través del Fondo de Compensaciones de las Víctimas del Crimen. Cuando esta asistencia no es suficiente, recurrimos a los recursos de nuestra comunidad para asistencia. Además, también pedimos ayuda a otros recursos comunitarios para asistencia monetaria como el D.A. Sword and Shield (Espada y Escudo del Fiscal del Distrito), una organización cívica fundada por el Fiscal del Condado de Cameron, Armando R. Villalobos. Esta organización ayuda a las víctimas del crimen violento con los gastos monetarios una vez que todos los recursos de la comunidad se hayan agotado. Cooperativamente, como una comunidad, hemos continuado a tener éxito ayudando a las víctimas del crimen violento a pesar de su estatus legal por la dedicación y colaboración de todas las agencias asociadas. ¡En fin, nuestra meta es servir a TODAS las víctimas con dignidad y respeto!

PGR; *continued from previous page*

mission for the PGR was to form a Flag Line at North Fort Hood. There was a reception planned for the surviving soldiers attached to the unit that had been attacked. They were going to be brought from the memorial service to North Fort Hood by bus, and our Flag Line would flank the road to the reception building.

As I rode into Gatesville, I was soon joined by other riders. When everyone arrived, there must have been around 50 or so motorcycles. It was like I remembered the first time I had seen the group: all kinds of leather, military emblems, and flags! Most everyone there was a veteran of some era: Iraq and Afghanistan, Desert Storm, Vietnam, and even a pair of Korean War veterans. The Ride Captain asked if there were any first time Patriot Guard Riders there. I raised my hand with a few others. He presented us with PGR pins and the group clapped and cheered. When we got the word, all the bikes roared and

continued on page 11

Victims and advocates must be careful about speaking "off the record."
Not all journalists honor confidentiality requests.
Victims must remember that agreeing to one interview does not mean that they have to agree to more.

Media; *continued from page 4*

Dignity: Crime Victims and the Media.

Advocates should help victims weigh the pros and cons of speaking with the media.

Victims should not speak with the media without the permission of the prosecutor before the case goes to trial or during the trial.

In homicide cases, victim families have the right to grieve in private and, through a media alert distributed by the advocate or the funeral director, they can refuse permission for reporters and cameras to be present at the funeral or burial. A law enforcement officer or chaplain can be enlisted to assure that the request is honored. This does not guarantee that media will not find ways to get what they are seeking, but it's worth the effort and I have found the refusal to be honored every time the victim has requested it.

If victims decide to grant an interview, they can set conditions such as the time and place of the interview and advance information about the general angle of the story. If desired conditions are not granted, the victim can withdraw their willingness to be interviewed.

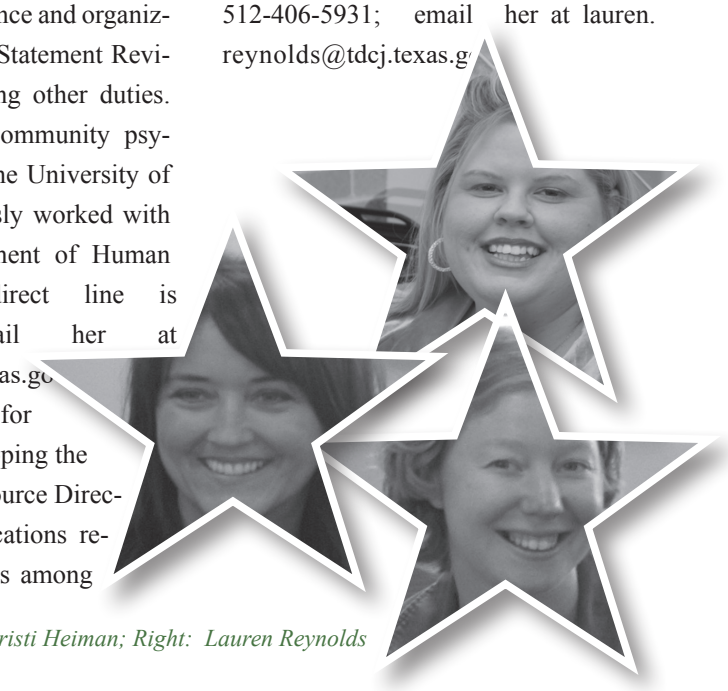
If you are a victim or a victim advocate and the offender in your case is in TDCJ, don't hesitate to call the Victim Services Division to discuss when determining whether or not to respond to media inquiries or whether to initiate media contact. The number is 800-848-4284; ask for Brooke Ellison. You may email Brooke at brooke.ellison@tdcj.state.tx.us.

The Clearinghouse is proud to introduce three new staff members who started in January: Kristi Heiman is the new Program Specialist II; Loree England is the new Planner; and Lauren Reynolds is the new Administrative Assistant III.

Kristi is responsible for developing the new training program on the Victim Impact Statement designed for law enforcement, district/county attorney's staff, probation, and court personnel. Kristi has a criminal justice degree from the University of Houston at Victoria. She is a former community supervision (probation) officer and a trainer for the TDCJ-Community Justice Assistance Division. With the training she and Janice Sager are developing, we are hoping to educate criminal justice staff on the importance of the VIS and the necessity each county has with establishing a system to ensure that the VIS is reported properly. Her direct line is 512-406-5916; email her at kristi.heiman@tdcj.texas.gov

Loree is responsible for planning the Clearinghouse Conference and organizing the Victim Impact Statement Revision Committees among other duties. Loree has a clinical/community psychology degree from the University of Michigan and previously worked with the Michigan Department of Human Services. Her direct line is 512-406-5922; email her at loree.england@tdcj.texas.go

Lauren is responsible for maintaining and developing the Victim Assistance Resource Directory, processing publications requests and mailing lists among other duties, and will also work with the layout of *The Victim's Informer*. Lauren has an animal science degree from (where else?) Texas A&M and comes to us from the TDCJ-CID Region VI Director's Office. Lauren's direct line is 512-406-5931; email her at lauren.reynolds@tdcj.texas.g



Above: Loree England; Top: Kristi Heiman; Right: Lauren Reynolds

PGR; *continued from page 9*

we rolled down the highway in formation to North Fort Hood with a Gatesville Police squad car escort. It was an awesome and exhilarating experience.

Once on base, our "Flag Wrangler" began handing out the US flags we would form the Flag Line with. I was reminded more than once by alert veterans how *not* to carry my flag. We formed the line and waited, flags unfurled. Because of delays at the memorial service, we stood with our flags for a couple of hours. But that turned into a wonderful experience as well. As we waited, soldier after soldier, enlisted and officer alike, some who had been wounded during the attack, came by each of us and shook our hands. They told us how much they appreciated the display. I was so humbled. Finally the buses rolled through, and we could see the soldiers inside waving to us. When they got off the buses, we got to meet them and have a bite to eat. It was dark when I finally got on my bike for the two-hour ride home. I had a hard time going to sleep that night, thinking about everything I had experienced during the day.

The PGR started as an impromtu response. It has turned into a nationwide show of honor and respect for our fallen veterans. As a civilian, it was fascinating to hang out with all those veterans and active soldiers. And what an honor it was to ride with the men and women of the Patriot Guard Riders.

Use this form to tell us you want to continue receiving *The Victim's Informer.*
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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*.

THE
VICTIM'S INFORMER

OUR GOAL IS TO PRINT NEWS OF INTEREST FOR VICTIMS AND VICTIM ADVOCATES

Angie McCown, Director
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Victim Services Division
victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov
tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov
8712 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE
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THE
VICTIM'S INFORMER
TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE
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Jahn; *continued from page 7*

think we have to categorize ourselves by the size of our office.

Years ago, after I took over this job I met one of the most talented VACs there ever was at a Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse conference. Betty Whitten was at that time the victim coordinator for Smith County and she graciously shared her ideas and suggestions for a best-practices victim program. Even though there is a difference in population between our counties of over one million people I was able to get some of the best ideas for new programs from Betty. Bottom line is you definitely need to find someone from a county approximately the size of your own to share, learn from and commiserate with, but don't let the size of your office limit your vision. Be practical, be creative, but most of all be open to ideas from all of the hard-working and talented VACs from the great state of Texas—no matter what size their office is!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Conference on Crime Against Women
March 8-10, 2010
Sheraton Hotel Downtown
Dallas, Texas
www.ccaw-online.org/2010_Conference.html

National Crime Victims' Rights Week
April 18–24, 2010
Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.

National Police Week 2010
Official Dates
May 9-15, 2010

Texas Academy for Victim Assistance
July 18-23, 2010