THE
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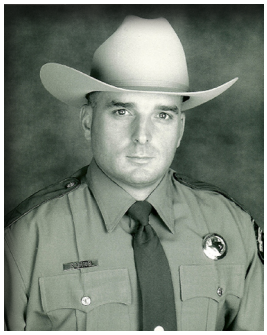

Community Honors Fallen Hero

15 Mile Section of US Highway 59 Named for Trooper Scott Burns

by Mike Jones

"Whose life was an inspiration;
Whose memory a benediction."
from "Success" –Bessie Anderson Stanley

On Friday, February 26, 2010, a 15 mile section of US Highway 59 near Linden, Texas was dedicated to the life of Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Scott Burns. Trooper Burns was murdered in his patrol car during a traffic stop in Marion County on April 29, 2008. He never got the chance to defend himself. His killer had jumped out of his car and fired five rounds from a 20-gauge shotgun into Scott's patrol car. He still had his seatbelt on, and the car was still in drive.

WHEN THE IDEA of including a story in *The Victim's Informer* about Trooper Scott Burns Memorial Highway was first presented to me, I agreed that it would be a good story to share with our readers. So, I set out to research the story and write about the event. I also wanted to know at least a little about the man I'd be writing about.

I read articles written about Scott, about his murder, and about the highway dedication. I drove out to Linden, Texas to meet with Scott's family. I met with his widow, Michaela, his mother and father, Judy and Ronnie, and with one of his brothers, Stacy. I also met with Representative Stephen Frost and Cass County Victim Assistance Coordinator, Connie Crow. I met Belle. I talked on the phone with some of his friends and coworkers. The more I learned about Scott Burns, the more I realized that he was no ordinary man. To tell you about Scott, I have to tell you a little about some of the people he touched.

Michaela Burns is what an old-timer might call a "live wire." She is a gregarious woman of seemingly boundless energy. When she talks about Scott, she lights up. When she thinks about him, she cries.

Michaela was working for the Cass County District Attorney's Office when she met Scott. As a state trooper, he had frequent business at the DA's Office. By all accounts, Scott was a humble, soft-spoken man. The first time he saw Michaela, he was a shy one. He somehow managed to stumble through the process of calling her to ask her for a date. Their courtship moved fast.

After their first date, Michaela told her mother that Scott would be the man she would marry. She moved in with Scott soon after. Although her mother did not really approve of that, she fell in love with Scott, too. A few months later in September 2006, Michaela and Scott were married. In November 2007, their daughter, Micah, who looks just like Scott, was born. Scott was killed five months later.

I met Scott's parents, Judy and Ronnie Burns, at their Triple "S" Feed Store in Linden. Scott's brother, Stacy, joined us. There is an area at the front of the store where they could shelve more merchandise if they wanted to. Instead, it is a place where folks can sit and talk with family and friends (as long as the malarkey is kept to a minimum). On the wall hang photos of friends and loved ones who have passed on. They haven't been able to put a picture of Scott there; it is just too painful.

Representative Frost said that Scott was a "typical east Texas man." He said that Scott was a soft-spoken man whose word meant everything. When I think of Judy and Ronnie Burns, I think they are probably what Representative Frost refers to as "typical" east Texas. Born and raised in Linden, they married young, set out to earn an honest living and raise a family. They had three sons, twins Stephen and Stacy, and Scott—the Triple S in the feed store name. Above all, I suppose all Ronnie and Judy have ever wanted from life was to grow old together and for their three sons to become decent, honest men. I think they got it right.

Judy told me stories of Scott that typified the kind of man he was. As a trooper, she said he had lots of chances to hand out tickets to people driving up

continued on next page

and down Highway 59, many of whom were locals. Many times, he issued warnings instead, for simple violations such as out-of-date inspection stickers. He hated to issue a ticket to someone he knew couldn't afford it. Because of how he handled himself and the situation, very often the people who received those warnings sought him out afterward to make sure he knew they had corrected their lapses.

Scott was a great uncle. He loved his nephews and nieces and liked to have lunch with them whenever he could. He would show up at their elementary school with his uniform on; he was a big hit.

Scott had a degree in criminal justice and for ten years was a Texas Department of Criminal Justice correctional officer, obtaining the rank of lieutenant. He worked at the Stiles Unit in Beaumont and the Telford Unit in New Boston before leaving to enter the DPS Academy. I've been to the Stiles Unit a number of times to interview offenders there. I wonder if I ever rubbed elbows with Sgt. Scott Burns. I hope so. He was very accustomed to dealing with offenders and very aware that illegal drugs very often play a significant role in so many of them ending up in prison. Ultimately, it was an offender with a previous drug possession conviction who killed him.

The day of Scott's funeral, the procession headed down the stretch of Highway 59 that would later be named in his honor. In the procession there were hundreds of officers from law enforcement agencies from all over Texas and as far away as California. Lining each side of the highway were around two thousand people standing in salute or with their hands over their hearts.

I asked Mike Horn if he had anything special he would like to say about Scott. Mike is Scott's lifetime friend and was best man at his wedding. They grew up together in Linden and worked together at TDCJ as correctional officers. They were DPS partners when Scott was killed. With a sadness still very much prevalent in his voice, he said he thought of Scott pretty much the same as everyone else. Well, everyone else that I have met during this assignment thought Scott was an incredibly special man, and they are living now with terrible pain and longing.

It was friends of the family, Royce and Cindy Henderson, who approached Representative Frost about naming the highway for Scott Burns. Royce is a truck driver and has seen highway dedication signs in other states and wondered if there were such signs here in Texas. To support the cause, they initiated a petition. Although a petition was not required, Representative Frost told them that it could help when it came time to introduce the bill. Cindy said they were sending in pages of signatures as they got them to Representative Frost's office. In the end they collected over 1400 signatures.

Representative Frost introduced and sponsored House Bill 3800, which easily passed both the Texas House and Senate and was enacted into law. In a news release from May 27, 2009, Frost said, "More than a year ago our community was stunned by a tragedy that touched all of our hearts. Trooper Burns made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. He is a true hero. As a recognition of his service, we are naming that stretch of highway between Linden and Jefferson, where he drove every day, in his memory."

Once they had achieved passing a law naming the section of Highway 59 for Scott, there was the task of raising the money, $6000, for the signs, which would all have to come from private funds. The folks of Cass and Marion emptied their pockets. The Department of Public Safety Officers' Association (DPSOA) also stepped in with a large donation.

"The outpouring of support from the community has been truly inspiring," Representative Frost also said. "It is a testament to the life of Trooper Burns."

DPS Sergeant Josh Mason worked

continued on back page

US Highway 59 between Linden and Jefferson, Texas is now Trooper Scott Burns Memorial Highway.

Micah at her Daddy's gravesite.

EVACUATION

by Lauren Reynolds
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

Each year Texas is faced with the threat of dangerous tropical storms. When these storms threaten, The Texas Department of Criminal Justice manages the possible relocation of thousands of incarcerated offenders, as well as those being supervised in the community. How does TDCJ keep track of all those offenders?

PART OF BEING A TEXAN is knowing we have odd and variable weather that makes our state so unique. Whether it changes from snow one day to 80 degrees and sunny the next or if it rains in your front yard while the back yard stays cracked and dry, most Texans have experienced a form of severe—and sometimes downright odd—weather. This state's drastic change of landscape leaves it susceptible to some of nature's most violent and devastating storms including hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and drought. Many have braved these storms, but on occasion people are advised and sometimes ordered to evacuate their homes and leave behind precious belongings.

To the majority of the general public, mainly those of us who have not been affected directly by crime, the idea that a mandatory evacuation of an area will most likely include a prison unit may not cross our mind. But to a crime victim, the idea that his/her offender is part of an evacuation could be a huge concern, especially if that offender is temporarily moved closer to the city where the victim resides. Moreover, not only are incarcerated offenders evacuated, but those out on parole and mandatory supervision also may be temporarily displaced to another location.

Ninety-nine prison units and state jails pepper the great state of Texas—not including privately run facilities. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has policies and procedures in place to handle and enforce these mass transitory displacements of units that may hold up to 3,000 offenders. June 1st will kick off the 2010 hurricane season and, in the event the Texas coastline is in danger of receiving a damaging blow, the information that follows will be put into action. Being mindful that these events can and do happen should not be interpreted as a need for alarm, but allow one to be aware such a mass exodus may take place.

Arriving at the conclusion to evacuate a prison or state jail is very intricate. Several sources are tapped for information, and timing is everything. The foundation for this decision is based on the strength of a particular storm as issued by the National Weather Service, the construction of the facilities involved, and if a significant storm surge is expected. Those involved then wait to receive the most precise location where the storm will hit. All of this information is sent through the chain of command up to and including the Correctional Institutions Division Director and the Executive Director of TDCJ.

When an evacuation is initiated, it is done so prior to a public evacuation and, for security, is not made public until completed. Currently, victims are not notified if an evacuation occurs. All offenders are transported via TDCJ bus; vans are utilized for those with special needs. Offenders may bring only one change of clothes, one item each of hygiene and a ten day supply of medication. Assigned housing rosters are kept intact throughout the relocation process to prevent any possible altercations between known enemies. Known gang information is perused and noted. Offenders assigned to minimum custody at the host facility are moved into the gym to create space in the cell blocks for those with increased levels of custody from the evacuated unit. Security at the host facility is of top concern. Extra staff, including an increase in medical staff, is in place upon arrival of the offenders.

Prior to August 2009, a new tracking system was put into place to monitor offender movement during an evacuation. It is called the "The Evacuation Management System" or "EVAC." This system provides a list of offenders who are to be evacuated and allows them to be assigned to 1 of 4 groups; a roster may then be printed and attached to each offender's *travel card*. EVAC tracks the movement of the offenders by coding the time the offenders depart the unit and updating the system upon the receipt of each group at the receiving unit. While in transit, one bus in each convoy calls to check in with the Command Center at pre-determined increments. Each convoy contains five buses plus a supervisor with a van. The same coordination is completed when the offenders return to the original unit. If a state jail is evacuated to another facility and during the duration an offender's release date occurs, that offender is released from the host facility. Offenders assigned to a prison unit are currently still sent to and released from Huntsville, Texas.

continued on page 10

Texas Academy for Victim Assistance

A No-Cost Educational Opportunity for Victim Advocates

Janice Harris Lord
Texas Board of Criminal Justice Board Member

A MAGNIFICENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITY for victim advocates in the field three years or less is available this summer. The Texas Academy for Victim Assistance (TAVA) will be held July 18-23, 2010 on the campus of the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse will not offer its conference this year due to fiscal constraints, but the Academy experience provides a thorough and comprehensive alternative for new victim services practitioners. A limited number of participants will be accepted into the Academy through an application process.

The mission of State Victim Assistance Academies is to provide comprehensive, academically based, fundamental education and skills-based training for victim assistance providers and allied professionals who routinely deal with victims of crime.

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) in the United States Department of Justice is committed to the establishment of a Victim Assistance Academy in all 50 states and specific territories, and Texas was one of the first five states to receive a $195,000 three-year grant to establish its Academy in 2000. To date, OVC has committed more than $7 million in grant funds toward establishing Victim Assistance Academies in 36 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C.

This year the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Governor's Office is funding the Texas Academy. Thanks to this generous grant, there is no registration fee for the Academy. Lodging and meals are also provided by through the grant. Participants or their agencies are responsible only for transportation to and from UTA. The UTA campus is convenient to both DFW Airport and Love Field.

The Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) is administering the Academy with the support of numerous state programs and coalitions. TVSA has designated Derrelynn Perryman, Director of Victim Services at the Arlington Police Department, to oversee the Academy. Mary Lieberman, a licensed social worker who formerly worked for the Austin Police Department Victim Services, was selected by TVSA as the Academy Coordinator. The Academy's academic partner is the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work.

During the spring of 2010, more than 200 victim advocates and supervisors throughout Texas participated in a Needs Assessment conducted by the UTA School of Social Work to determine specific topics that new advocates need, regardless of the specific victim population their agency serves. The results drove the development of a victim-centered curriculum within the context of services across time. In other words, the curriculum begins with how to address victim's needs at the scene of the crime and ends with what the victim needs when the offender is in corrections and re-entering the community.

The Goals of the Academy are to:

- Provide an experiential format for learning, with case studies and real-life scenarios supplemented by student text readings. Group activities with short didactic lectures have meaningful application to victim service providers in their day-to-day work experience.
- Continuously evaluate student feedback and experiences to improve the Academy.
- Utilize a diverse faculty of victim service practitioners who have expertise in various victim issues, and staff from other institutions that support victim intervention and restoration.
- Partner with stakeholders and offer training that complements other victim service initiatives.

Advocates and allied professionals in criminal justice, health care, or any field that serves victims of crime may apply. Eligible applicants include those who: have been in the field of victim services less than three years or have been in a single area of victim services for more than three years and desires cross training; serve in either paid or volunteer positions; and agree to participate in evaluation of the Academy, its curriculum and structure to ensure high-quality Academies in the future.

Questions regarding future Academies may be directed to Mary Lieberman at 845-367-1877 or marylieberman@uta.edu.

Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles:

Victim Resources within Reach

Jackie DeNoyelles
Texas Board of Pardons and Parole Board Member

The members of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles are committed to giving victims a voice in the parole process. Board Directive (BPP-DIR.08-03.07) outlines the procedure we follow.

SUBJECT: Personal Appearance on Victim's Behalf
PURPOSE: To establish procedural guidelines to allow a victim, the legal guardian of the victim, or close relative of the deceased victim to appear in person before a parole panel member relative to parole consideration.
AUTHORITY: Texas Government Code Sections 508.117, 508.153
DISCUSSION: Section 508.153 of the Texas Government Code provides that before a parole panel considers parole or mandatory supervision release for an offender who is serving a sentence for an offense in which a person was a victim, the parole panel shall allow one person to appear in person before a board member or parole commissioner to present a statement of the person's views about the offense, the offender, and the effect of the offense on the victim.

Nothing in this directive is intended to limit the voter's discretion to allow additional victims to make a personal appearance or to make contact by phone when a phone call is requested in lieu of a personal appearance.

DEFINITIONS: **Close Relative of a Deceased Victim**: a person who was the spouse of a deceased victim at the time of the victim's death, a parent of the deceased victim, an adult brother, sister or child of the deceased victim; or nearest relative by consanguinity if previous listed relatives are deceased or incapacitated due to physical or mental illness or infirmity.

Guardian of a Victim: a person who is the legal guardian of a victim whether or not the legal relationship between the guardian and victim exists because of the age of the victim or the physical or mental incompetency of the victim.

Lead Voter: the member of a parole panel designated to cast the first vote in the parole review process.

Parole Panel: members of the Board designated by the Chairman to consider a person for release to parole.

Requestor (Person Appearing): the victim, guardian of the victim, or close relative of the deceased victim.

Victim: a person who is the victim of sexual assault, kidnapping, aggravated robbery, felony stalking, or who has suffered bodily injury or death as a result of the criminal conduct of another. Sexual assault includes an offense under Section 21.02, Penal Code.

PROCEDURE:

Notification

Victim Notification: The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division shall notify a victim of their right to make a personal appearance pursuant to Texas Government Code Sections 508.117 and 508.153. This notification shall occur before a parole panel considers an offender for parole who is serving a sentence for an offense in which a person was a victim in accordance with existing policy and procedures.

Board Notification: The TDCJ Victim Services shall provide the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles with a list of names of victims maintained in their database to include the appropriate contact information.

Procedure for Personal Appearance

The Lead Voter of the parole panel assigned to consider a case for parole is responsible for contacting the victim to determine whether the victim desires a personal appearance with the board member or parole commissioner. The Lead Voter shall coordinate requests for personal appearances on behalf of the panel.

The Lead Voter of the parole panel shall serve as the primary contact person, but any member(s) of the panel may meet with the victim upon mutual agreement.

The victim shall be advised that state law provides that one victim, or if more than one person is entitled to appear, the person chosen by all persons entitled to appear, may appear in person to present their views. However, the number of presenters may be increased at the discretion of the panel.

continued on page 11

Crime Victims Support Circles

by Marilyn Armour, Ph.D. and Ellen Halbert

Crime Victims Support Circles are monthly facilitated mutual help groups for victims of crime. The circles were started in January 2005 by Ellen Halbert, Director of the Travis County District Attorney's Office, Victim Witness Division in consultation with Marilyn Armour, Ph.D. former psychotherapist and Associate Professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin.

The idea of convening circles for crime victims evolved after the mother of a young woman spoke with Ellen about how badly her daughter, who had been severely assaulted, needed to talk with other crime victims. Ellen also recognized that many crime victims have to put off their healing until after their case has been adjudicated. "This is the very time they most need help," Ellen said. "We offer lots of help for the acute times but once their case is finished, counselors in the District Attorney's office have other crime victims to serve–so they are left alone."

Ellen decided to start support circles so that both current and post adjudication crime victims would have the chance for greater healing. Ellen and Marilyn also feel that crime victims have a hidden resource in each other. Crime victims know the journey and know the questions to ask each other that can unlock hidden fears or access decisions people made as a result of the crime–decisions that have shut down their living or ability to move forward. If crime victims have the chance to meet together, perhaps they could support and encourage each other through the criminal justice process and also help with the stuck places that otherwise get sealed off. In support circles, therefore, victims reach out to victims.

The mission of crime victim support circles is to give crime victims a safe place to use each other as resources in discussing their case as well as dealing with their suffering, pain and fears. The goals of circles are to (1) reduce secondary trauma by providing a safe place to address and 'make sense' out of experiences in the criminal justice system and (2) diminish the potential for protracted trauma-based reactions by recognizing and responding to the overt and hidden aspects of suffering related to crime.

Crime Victims Support Circles are facilitated by Ellen in consultation with Marilyn. It is a winning combination. Ellen is responsible for recruitment and, because of her professional position, often has prior knowledge of and connection with the crime victim. She also has information about court procedures and can maintain an ongoing connection with the crime victim as he or she goes through the criminal justice system. Marilyn has a lengthy background as a former therapist and brings expertise about complicated bereavement and trauma reactions, and knowledge of group processes.

Support circles consist of 6 to 8 crime victims plus two facilitators. Crime victims have been homicide survivors and victims of DWI offenses, and victims of physical and sexual assault. "We think victims of burglary and property crimes might benefit too," Ellen said. Meetings are held once a month for two hours at a central location that conveys safety, privacy and comfort. For a while the support circle met at the Episcopal Seminary using both an old home and a special room in the library. Currently the circle meets from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm on the last Tuesday of each month at the Highland Park Baptist Church. Both Ellen and Marilyn wish the circle met twice a month but "we just haven't been able to commit more time."

Circles give crime victims a healing community that reduces some of the aloneness and shame they may feel because others do not understand what they have been through.

Circle meetings open and close with a talking piece that gets passed from person to person to set the tone for serenity, reflection, speaking from the heart and to ensure that everyone who wants to speak can do so without interruption. A reflection question is also asked at the beginning to help circle members center on what is important to share with others. Some of the questions have included the following: "What's left over from the crime?" "How are you different from who you were before?" "What have you been told about forgiveness?" "Who doesn't get it?" "What do you do to comfort and reassure yourself when you have reactions to the crime?" Crime victims have commented that these questions are particularly helpful in focusing them on issues that they often don't talk about.

continued on page 10

SEXTING

Investigating Cyberspace Child Exploitation

by Detective Joel Pridgeon
Child Exploitation Unit; Austin Police Department

"SEXTING" IS THE LATEST Internet buzzword to dominate media headlines and work its way into police investigations. The phrase sexting originally began as a combination of "sex" and "texting." It was used several years ago to describe naughty text messages sent via cellular telephone, frequently referred to in stories of office romances and flirting on-the-fly (Roberts, 22). It is, therefore, not a new phenomenon as people at various jobs have been disciplined for sexually oriented pager messages in the past as well as suggestive e-mails today. More recently, however, sexting is a frequent topic of television news stories involving adolescents and are seemingly more scandalous when they involve images that go with the texts.

At the Austin Police Department Child Exploitation Unit (APD-CEU) we define sexting as any sexually oriented communication, whether text or video or audio, between two adolescents, typically both under the age of 17, using electronic means, whether cellular telephone or computer. This clarification is purely informal to our department and most certainly varies to other law enforcement agencies. Investigators at the Austin Independent School District Police Department (AISD-PD) mirror our definition of sexting and it has helped streamline information and expectations during joint investigations. Our view of this phenomenon is based upon case experience, judicial responses, and expectations and input from the Travis County Assistant District Attorneys assigned to our investigations. Each case is considered separately for content, intent of the involved parties, and how close in age those parties are to each other.

When sexting incidents occur, immediate consideration is applied to potential harm to the involved juveniles. The greatest concern is when pictures or video are used in the session, because if the person or persons in those images are under the age of 18, then child pornography most likely has been produced. If that is the case, then it is urgent to secure those images and keep others from receiving them. Even if the images are taken with a cellular telephone, electronic images can eventually be sent to an e-mail address or website with ease, and from there they propagate on the Internet. Investigators focus on securing the images and tracing their path across electronic media. Another concern is this behavior can possibly lead to future encounters. A child who becomes confident in carrying on with this type of interaction may seek out more with different partners. Eventually the child may lower their guard and invite a stranger who may not be another adolescent, but someone older and/or more harmful. The child who is the aggressor, sometimes referred to as the suspect of the situation, may also become comfortable. It has been repeated in several cases that the suspect becomes bolder and surer of themselves with each online contact they make. Potential charges are based on existing penal code statutes—not specifically written for sexting, presence of any force or coercion, evidence recovered, involvement of the parties, etc. In addition, prosecution of each case is considered individually but in light from past prosecuted cases.

Currently our department does not have any official stats for sexting as the APD-CEU just started to monitor specific sexting cases during spring semester of last year, and we know for a fact not all incidents in Austin, much less Travis County, were reported to us. In addition, AISD-PD has their own separate statistics as offenses assigned to them have originated on school properties and ours typically originate from residences. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy posted results of a sexting survey from Fourth Quarter 2008. Of 653 teens surveyed, 20% of them said they had electronically sent nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves. Sexually suggestive messages were sent by 39% of the population. Of those combined percentages, 71% of teen females and 67% of teen males were sending them to boyfriends and girlfriends. Of the total teens, 15% said they sent content to people they knew strictly from online (The National Campaign, 2008). Bear in mind this poll involves a small population and the data is influenced by what level of access American teenagers have to the necessary technology. When varying reports show teens with access to the Internet are in the 90% and up range and seemingly every middle school and high school student has a phone in their pocket, however, I'm willing to give those stats some measure of weight.

The point is, sexting is frequent, and with the growing popularity of cellular

continued on page 8

Sexting; *continued from page 7*

telephone technology and online social networking; it's not going to subside. Police can no longer brush these investigations off saying, "We didn't do that when I was that age." Of course we didn't; most of us didn't have cellular phones when we were that age. Then again, is technology the issue? Webcams and phones with video capability may have been rare or non-existent in most schools ten to fifteen years ago, but stories of children taking photographs of themselves or other kids with a conventional camera, whether 35mm or instant film, weren't unheard of. The only difference from past days is when a student had taken a nude Polaroid picture of themselves, or worse, a video with VHS camera, it was passed from one person to the next. Those images didn't duplicate with each viewing. Pictures and video could be tracked down because copying them required other equipment, and frequently a single copy was shared. If the image was destroyed, it was gone for good. Digital images today, however, are duplicated every single time they are sent via phone or Internet. Now the student has their images in two places, then four, then sixteen, and once they hit the mainstream Internet, the number of copies is limitless as is the number of people viewing them.

Exactly why this phenomenon takes place is a recurring question. In the multitude of juvenile-to-juvenile sexting cases I have worked, the reasons have varied widely. Many answers to my question of "why did you send that picture" are met with a simple shrug of the shoulders. Some children have done it seeking approval, while others thought it would be funny. Still others did it for sexual gratification, more so of the person receiving the picture than themselves, but the sender may have received satisfaction from it as well. We had a rash of similar incidents in a three-month period last spring where single images of nude middle school females were sent from one cell phone to the next. Each female in the picture had volunteered to pose and, when discovered, their responses ranged from frightened, to embarrassed, to apathetic.

I'm frequently asked for safety tips from parents and I tell them vigilance is the key. All cell phones should be checked, no messages are allowed to be erased until viewed by a parent and parents should go over their monthly cellular bill and double check telephone numbers that are dialed or received. The same goes for computer usage. Computers should be password protected with parental controls so that the child cannot go online unsupervised. If a child has an e-mail address, chat program, or a blog page, all information is kept public and none of it is deleted until the parent checks it. No child should have a computer in their own room; all computers should be kept in a common area of the house where they can be monitored continuously. Digital cameras, cameras on phones, and web cams should be removed or disabled. If a parent can't disable a camera on the child's phone, then that phone needs to be replaced or removed.

This is not to say that the Internet or cellular service is the source of the problem, only the tool. Prevention starts with the relationship between the child and their home. Take away one form of communication and the child will most likely seek out another. The prevalence of cell phones in a middle school is rivaled only by the level of Internet access that can be obtained at that school, at a friend's house, or even at an Austin sandwich shop. Parents have to not only be vigilant but also informative. Parents need to explain to their children the dangers, both present and potential, in this behavior. Simply taking things away without discussion will only frustrate the child and does little to teach against supplementing one form of communication with another. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has some wonderful resources at www.missingkids.com to help illustrate the hazards and better illustrate the need for caution.

Sexting is not going away and will most likely evolve into other formats and increased occurrences. The persistent pressure on children to comply with peer expectations and gain approval is an entirely different topic of discussion, but is an issue older and deeper than sexting. The format of sexting is a result of recent technology, but the reasons behind it are as ancient as the concept of raising children. We may not be able to stop sexting from happening, but by understanding it, establishing a response plan, and remaining vigilant, we can definitely slow it down and maybe stop one more set of nude images of a child from propagating in cyberspace.

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Detective Joel Pridgeon *has a bachelor's of science degree in psychology from Texas A&M University and has been an officer with the Austin Police Department since 1996 and a detective with the Child Abuse/Child Exploitation Unit since 2003. He is a TCLEOSE Master Peace Officer and Certified Instructor and has taught courses on child exploitation and law enforcement to a variety of audiences from college students to healthcare and child advocate professionals. He has been called to testify as an expert of child pornography.*

Victim Services in Community Supervision

by David Moore
Victim Services Coordinator; *Brazoria County CSCD*

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE system has many intriguing facets with some being well known, while others are more obscure. Within the midsized Texas county of Brazoria you will find an invaluable resource within the criminal justice system that is still more of an oddity than a norm within community supervision across our great state. The Brazoria County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) has implemented a Victim Services Program. This program began 9 years ago to serve the victims of crime whose offenders have been placed on community supervision (probation) for periods ranging from 1 to 10 years. The program has been supported over the years primarily by federal grant funds through the Office of the Attorney General of Texas. The efforts of this program have protected the rights of victims while reducing feelings of re-victimization.

In years past victims lacked a voice, received no compensation and were not given the opportunity to attend or to be heard during court proceedings. But thanks to the Victim of Crime Act, which was passed 25 years ago, those gaps have been filled. Although this legislation was a huge step in the right direction, many would say we still have a long way to go and I would have to agree. One area that can have a significant impact in reducing re-victimization in victims whose offenders are placed on supervision is through the implementation of programs such as this one. Many times victims are left in the dark to wonder what is happening while their offenders are seemingly living freely in their community. Without someone to address these questions and concerns, many victims feel as though they have been dropped into the black hole of the probation world without a candle to guide them. This program acts as that light to walk them through this difficult time.

As a former community supervision officer, I empathize with the work loads of supervision officers across the state and the extremely difficult task that they are given in attempting to correct unwanted behavior in individuals who very often do not desire to change. The training and focus of most community supervision officers is primarily on how to effectively supervise these offenders. This is the primary reason why programs such as this one are so vitally important in the community supervision realm. Victims' issues and concerns are so vast that already overburdened officers cannot be expected to serve as both the officer and the victims' advocate nor does it even seem appropriate to ask them to wear both of these hats. Victims are in need of a strong voice within supervision departments and victims desire to be heard through all phases of the court case. Many officers are not aware of victims' rights; they do not have time or the training to understand the needs of victims who have been unwittingly thrown into the criminal justice system. By the time a victim has reached my office they will have been in contact with the court system and have participated on various levels with law enforcement and the district attorney's office. Sometimes the victims are extremely upset about the offenders being placed on supervision and would like to see them fail and be placed immediately in jail upon their first violation. Others would like to see offenders rehabilitated and become productive members of society. In either of these instances, victims deserve to have someone who will listen to their concerns without bias and who can take the time to help them understand the process while understanding emotional outbursts related to their victimization. Victims often are in need of community resources that may not be determined unless a patient ear is available. Many victims may not even be aware of what their needs are or that community resources are available for them. These referrals can range from protective orders and placement in shelters to transportation and counseling. Our program sends every victim whose offender is placed on supervision a copy of the offender's conditions of supervision, information about victims' rights, restitution collection information and contact information. Throughout the duration of supervision we will offer them court accompaniment anytime there is court action being taken while advocating for their concerns to all parties involved in the judicial process. This program provides a victim-minded voice within the community supervision department allowing the victim's needs to be assessed throughout the life of the supervision case. Once the case has been terminated from supervision the victim will be notified of a successful completion. If the offender's community supervision is revoked, the victim is provided information about Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) if the offender is sentenced to a TDCJ facility. Along with TDCJ Victim Services Division, this program has fourteen cooperative working agreements throughout the county and state working in a collaborative effort to provide uninterrupted services to victims of crime within Brazoria County.

continued on back page

Evacuation; *continued from page 3*

If an offender does manage to escape, during an evacuation or at any time, many departments external and internal to TDCJ work together to apprehend the offender. Two staff members with TDCJ Victim Services Division keep pagers with them at all times that alert them if an escape occurs. No matter the time of night or day, the staff member carrying the pager immediately will call any victims registered with the VSD Victim Notification System who are associated with the offender. They also advise law enforcement in the victim's hometown of the situation.

Hurricane evacuation planning for the TDCJ Parole Division starts before June when all offenders within 50 miles of the Gulf Coast are given an emergency contact card listing the 1-800 number to the Division's Command Center. Parole Officers also obtain potential evacuation locations with family within the state which are investigated by Parole Officers for suitability. In the event of evacuation, an offender must contact the Command Center to report their location.

The Division also reviews the parole population along the coastline to identify high risk cases such as sex offenders and offenders on electronic monitoring devices. In the event of mandatory evacuation a high risk offender without an approved evacuation location, will be directed to report to a Parole Office or halfway house for transport to another halfway house or TDCJ facility. While at a facility, offenders may not leave and are supervised by teams of Parole Officers with assistance from CID correctional personnel. No matter where an offender goes–to a halfway house, to stay with family or to a unit–there is always a continuation of supervision.

Between 2005 and 2008, Texas experienced major hurricanes and from those events, new evacuation systems have been developed and enhanced to ensure accuracy. Coordination efforts involved in evacuating entire prison units are widespread and complex. Immense resources as well as precise preparation and communication are needed during evacuations. It is quite a challenge to cope with the spontaneous Texas weather, but the various divisions within TDCJ do so in a controlled manner.

Circles; *continued from page 6*

Although circle members talk about a wide variety of issues, Ellen and Marilyn pay close attention to points where members can help each other. "I remember one case," Ellen said, "where both victims had been assaulted by male strangers. We could tell that the newer crime victim had all kinds of things she wanted to ask the group member who had been dealing with the aftermath of the assault for many years. With some encouragement, she began asking questions that had been haunting her. Some of these questions actually dove right into territory that the group member had long avoided but knew she needed to address. 'I never would have thought about those areas because only someone who had lived through a similar crime would have known to ask about them' she told the group. There was another situation," Ellen said, "when a circle member didn't know what to do with the personal belongings of a loved one and all the ambivalence they felt about the decisions they were making. Because we knew that another circle member had recently dealt with similar issues, we could foster their connection and sharing of information which helped both of them in their healing." Although facilitation is important to the process, both Ellen and Marilyn contend that the strength of the group is in these special connections and the giving and learning circle members do with each other.

Ellen and Marilyn hope that support circles for crime victims might be started in other counties. They recommend that facilitation be done by an experienced volunteer from a victim services staff who has strong working relationships with prosecutors and victim services staff and a volunteer licensed therapist skilled in working with crime victims. Referrals are made by victim services staff and prosecutors but may include self referrals or referrals from others such as psychotherapists. New members are told that the support circle program is designed to help crime victims deal with the aftereffects of the crime, some of which may be lingering and hard to uproot. There is no expectation of progress. Rather, crime victims know things about the insidious consequences of crime and can therefore access areas with each other that non crime victims know little about. New members are asked to notify facilitators if they cannot attend the circle and to agree to the confidentiality requirement: What is said stays in the room.

For more information about Crime Victims Support Circles, contact Ellen Halbert at 512-854-9079 or ellen.halbert@co.travis.tx.us or Marilyn Armour

BPP; *continued from page 5*

Time, place, and duration of the meeting shall be established at the discretion of the panel. Every effort will be made to schedule an appearance within a reasonable time frame following receipt of a request for personal appearance.

Record

A record of the meeting and a brief summary of the comments shall be placed in the offender's file.

All information obtained and maintained, including a victim protest letter or other correspondence or a victim impact statement, is subject to the provisions of Section 508.313, Texas Government Code.

Every week, Victim's Services division sends each Board office a list of victims who have indicated a desire to speak to the lead voter before a decision is made. Although the vast majority of victims are satisfied with speaking telephonically with the lead voter, a few wish to exercise their right to appear in person.

Under code 508.153, voting members are not required to speak with the individual if they are not a "victim" as defined in Section 508.117 and/or the offender is not currently serving time for the offense committed against that victim. However, voting members do have the discretion to contact individuals that do not meet the required criteria and may attempt to contact those individuals by telephone before a final decision is made regarding the offender's possible release. The Victim Services Division should be contacted initially by the victim(s) and/or family members at the appropriate time.

The Parole Board receives hundreds of pieces of correspondence weekly, including letters, faxes and e-mails from victims of crime. You are encouraged to submit victim related requests for personal appearance before the Parole Board and correspondence protesting an offender's release to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division in Austin for processing.

All conversations and correspondence between victims and voting members remain confidential.

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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

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TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE VOL.15, NO. 2 – JUN/JUL 2010

Burns; *continued from page 2*

with and trained Scott when he first became a trooper in Cass County. He spoke at the February dedication ceremony when the Texas Department of Transportation installed the Scott Burns Memorial Highway signs. Sgt. Mason said Scott was "definitely a hero." He said he loved his job, loved his family, and was very well-respected in Cass and Marion counties, where he worked. Sgt. Mason said that naming the section of Highway 59 is a great reminder of who Scott was; he was a "great man, on and off duty."

"When motorists [who don't know Scott] pass the sign," Sgt Mason told me, "I hope they think about Scott, that he was a hero, and he must have done something special."

Scott Burns and Belle

CSCD; *continued from page 9*

As much as I wanted to give a fuller view of a small victim services program within the community supervision and corrections department, perhaps you have gained a small glimpse into this somewhat obscure world. My hope is that this once obscure world of victim services within community supervision becomes a norm for all departments across the state and I hope this has raised at least a curiosity within you about victim services within community supervision, which has become a passion for this officer turned advocate.