The
VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE VOL. 16, NO. 2 – JUN/JUL 2011

Diary of a Trafficking Victim

Author Anonymous
Submitted by Linda Brandmiller
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This article was written by a trafficking victim who just recently received a T-Visa through the work of the Catholic Charities Immigration Department. Because of the nature of this crime, some descriptions in this article may be disturbing to some readers.

T Nonimmigrant Status
(T-Visa) protects victims of human trafficking and allows victims to remain in the United States to assist in an investigation or prosecution of human trafficking.

I WAS NINETEEN YEARS OLD when U.S. immigration officials discovered me in the trunk of a car at a random immigration stop in Hidalgo, Texas. And I thank God that they found me because if they had not rescued me, I am sure that I would be dead by now. I suffered for three long months at the hands of brutal men and women who used me for sex and tortured me for fun. I didn't know it at the time, but I was a trafficking victim. This is my story…

I lived a hard life in my home country of Honduras before coming to the United States to reunite with my husband who was already here. I never knew my real father and my step-father started sexually abusing me when I was just a child. I told my mother what he was doing to me but she didn't believe me and she threw me out of the house when I was only twelve years old and pregnant with my step-father's child. Alone and homeless with a young baby and only a child myself, I lived on the streets, until the staff of an institution in Honduras found me and I lived there for a year and half. That was where I met my husband.

After I had our son, my husband left for the U.S. to try to make a better life for us. Soon after, my sister-in-law wanted to come to the U.S. so I went with her to be with my husband, leaving my two small children behind. It was a terribly difficult decision but I thought it was the best for all of us if I could help my husband and then send for our children later.

We made it to Veracruz, Mexico and my sister-in-law wanted to continue the journey by train but I was afraid to go on the train so she abandoned me at the station. Seeing I was alone, a woman called "La Madre" (the Mother) approached me and said she could help me and would make arrangements for me to get a job in the U.S. For several weeks, she made me cook and clean for her. She didn't pay me and told me that this was to earn my transportation to the U.S.

After a few weeks, three men came to get me in the middle of the night. I heard La Madre say "I have one for you" and I saw them give her money for me. I didn't understand what was happening and I was afraid to go with them. I tried to ask who they were and where they were taking me but they hit me and told me to just shut up and do what I was told. I begged La Madre not to let the men take me but she never said a word. She just walked away with the money the men gave her.

They drove me to a house near Reynosa, out in the country with nothing else around. They took all my identification documents from me including my birth certificate and they locked me in a room and kept me there for almost three months.

During that time, I was repeatedly sold for sex, beaten, threatened, drugged and starved. The room was bare with no

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Going GREEN!

We are going green! All future issues of *The Victim's Informer* newsletter will be available **ONLY ONLINE**. Send us your e-mail address to: tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov, and we will notify you when the current issue is available on our website. We'll even send you the link! Or you can find online *Informer* issues at www.tdcj.texas.gov; click **Victim Services Division** in the **Quick Links** box; scroll down to the Victim's Informer newsletter link. You will need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the files.

There are so many people involved in the criminal justice process, but how many of us know what everyone's role is within the system? Beginning with Volume 15, issue Number 4 of *The Victim's Informer* were the first two installments of an eight-part series entitled, "A Day in the Life of …" For this series, we decided to "shadow" a small group of participants in the process to learn and share with you what a typical day is like for them. We continue the series in this issue with the third set of articles about a typical day in the life of a parole officer and a corrections officer. We will finish the series in the September/October 2011 issue highlighting the typical day of an incarcerated offender and a victim.

A Day in the Life of …

Parole Officer

by Mike Jones
TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

MY DAY TO SHADOW a parole officer started easily enough on Thursday morning when I arrived at the Gist unit in Beaumont at 7:30 am. I cleared the security check and had a seat to wait for Devona Vital, my parole officer for the day.

The day was to begin with a parole revocation hearing for an offender who had violated several conditions of his parole, one of which was getting a new conviction. Back in 1993 when I began working for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, I was a statistician with the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) Hearing Section. I got to witness a revocation hearing back then, so I had an idea of what to expect. After a few minutes, Ms. Vital arrived at the unit along with Saisha Parker and Brandy Kieschnick. Ms. Parker is the offender's parole officer and Ms. Kieschnick is a hearing officer with the BPP. Ms. Vital presented the evidence of the offender's parole violations during the hearing.

After about 15 minutes, Ms. Vital, pronounced VEE-tall, Ms. Kieschnick, and I were setup in the contact visitation area of the unit to conduct the hearing. Ms. Parker waited in the reception area; she would be called if needed. It was a simple and unremarkable hearing. Ms. Kieschnick read the offender his rights as well as a list of allegations, from technical issues to the new conviction. The offender admitted to each violation, and Ms. Kieschnick found there was a preponderance of evidence to support the allegations. She informed the offender that she would submit her findings to the BPP panel, which will decide whether or not to allow him to remain on parole while serving his new nine-month conviction. At 8:37 the hearing was adjourned and we were allowed back in the unit reception area, except for the offender, of course. He went back to his housing. At this point I hadn't yet anticipated how the pace for the rest of the day was about to take off!

> A history of drug and alcohol abuse and a lack of education were the most common issues facing the offenders we saw that day.

Ms. Vital and I went through the main security gate, "sally port," onto the unit grounds. She headed toward K-Dorm with me trying to keep up. K-Dorm is the administrative segregation (ad-seg) pod on the unit. Most offenders in ad-seg are there because they have been assaultive to unit staff or other offenders. Offenders also are housed in ad-seg if they are confirmed members of a gang. We were seeing an offender who is both.

Luckily, this was March and the temperature and humidity outside were still at a bearable level for Beaumont. Ad-seg is not a comfortable place to be during the summer. In the pods, there is no A/C, and the smell and humidity is a lot to deal with. Offenders in ad-seg spend 23 hours a day in their cells.

Our offender is brought to us in handcuffs. He is wearing wrinkled boxers, some gray socks, and shuffling shoes. He is covered in tattoos, mostly of swastikas. His tattoos covered his chest, back, neck, and even his some of his face. He was on parole when he got the new conviction. The BPP panel voted to allow him to continue his parole while he served this new sentence. Ms. Vital gives him the news and instructs him to report to the parole office as soon as he discharges from the unit.

We left K-Dorm and headed back toward the main sally port. There, standing in a small designated area marked

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TDCJ

Corrections Officer

by Mike Jones
TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

I ROLL OUT from Victim Services Division headquarters in Austin at O-Three Hundred heading to Gatesville. My mug does not fit the cup holder in the Chevy Lumina from motor pool, so, regrettably, I have to leave my coffee behind. It's a little cool this morning, and the high for the day is expected to reach only the low 70s. This is good.

At 04:40 I arrive at the Hughes unit. At the main security checkpoint, I remove my belt and boots and begin to empty my pockets in order to gain entrance into the unit. I stand out in my khaki slacks and black polo shirt among the approximately 25 correctional officers (COs) in their standard uniform of gray pants and shirt with blue trim.

I place everything on the x-ray machine and I walk through the metal detector. I set it off with my titanium knee. The CO pats me down, checks the bottoms of my stocking feet and reviews my verification card for my fake knee. I am cleared through the main gate and onto the unit grounds. As I enter 1-Building, I am introduced to the CO who I'll shadow for the day. I follow him to a briefing room, where the COs meet for "turn out." The morning briefing includes topics on professionalism, aggressive offenders and the upcoming Texas heat. After the briefing comes roll call and duty post assignments. Post assignments typically change from day to day. My CO and I are assigned to the 3-Building desk. At 05:30 we report to our duty post. The unit this morning is quieter than I had expected.

My CO for the day, Officer Rodriguez, has 15 years of TDCJ experience, all at the Hughes unit. He is a unit mentor and a certified Spanish interpreter. There is a strong camaraderie among corrections staff, and it is very apparent at the Hughes unit. In this kind of job it is imperative to know your coworkers have your back.

> It's about respect. COs must earn the offenders' respect; offenders must earn the COs' respect.

Officer Rodriguez and I report to 3-Bldg with the other officers assigned there for the day. Second shift briefs us and leaves. 3-Bldg is where some safekeeping offenders are housed. For a number of reasons, they are vulnerable and must be housed separately from other offenders. This does not mean they are not dangerous.

3-Bldg has three pods; each is divided into three separate sections with a day room and three tiers of cells. Each tier has two showers and eight cells with two bunks in each cell. Each pod has 144 beds.

The pods have their own control center, or "picket." The CO assigned to the picket controls the pod gates, the section doors, as well as the doors to all the cells and has a clear view of each section. A CO, referred to as a "rover," controls the movement of the offenders in and out of the pods. Throughout the day, offenders are allowed to leave the housing area for meals, education and vocation, recreation, medical appointments, and work. The rover also has the remote control to the TVs in the day rooms. There are two small TVs in each dayroom; one stays on a sports channel, the other on a program decided by majority vote. No HBO.

3-Bldg has a triangular-shape concrete recreation area. It has some exercise equipment, a basketball hoop and handball courts. Access to the recreation yard and the time allowed are governed by custody level. An offender's custody level depends on his current institutional behavior, his previous institutional behavior, and his current offense and sentence length. If he violates rules, he will

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Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles:

DECISION-MAKING AND THE PAROLE PROCESS

Jackie DeNoyelles
Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Board Member

THIS MONTH WE CONTINUE our series of answers to common questions about Parole In Texas. Input from victims is included at every step of the decision making process. Additional information, including Parole Division Review and Release Process Charts, can be found in the *Parole in Texas* handbook, available online at www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp. Click on the Publications and Parole in Texas links.

Answers to Common Questions

How does an offender learn when he or she becomes eligible for parole?

Soon after each offender's arrival, the Correctional Institutions Division Records Office will provide a time calculation sheet showing the initial parole eligibility date (although this date may be subsequently revised depending upon the amount of "good time" earned or lost). In addition, Institutional Parole Offices have parole officers on each unit to answer parole-re-lated questions.

Can any offender be paroled?

No. Offenders who are sentenced to death are never eligible for parole. Offenders sentenced to life without parole are never eligible for parole.

What is Discretionary Mandatory Supervision?

Offenders eligible for release on mandatory supervision who are incarcerated for an offense committed on or after September 1, 1996, must be approved for release by a parole panel. If the parole panel denies the offender's release on mandatory supervision, the offender shall be reviewed one year from the panel decision date, which will constitute the subsequent projected release date.

What is a Senate Bill 45 case?

In accordance with Section 508.046 of the Texas *Government Code* as amended by S.B. 45, 74th Legislature, a two-thirds majority vote of the entire board is necessary for parole decisions involving capital felons, persons convicted of an offense under 21.11(a)(1) (Indecency with a Child), 21.02 (Continuous Sexual Assault of a Child), 22.021 (Aggravated Sexual Assault) of the *Penal Code*, or persons required under Section 508.145 of the Texas *Government Code* to serve 35 calendar years before becoming eligible for release on parole.

Is parole "automatic" when an offender meets the time and program requirements?

No. Offenders will be considered for parole when the statutory time requirements are met and they have served sufficient time to be legally eligible to be released. However, it is up to parole panel members to decide, among other things, whether an offender has properly adjusted in prison, is no longer a threat to society, and is ready to accept the responsibilities of a law-abiding citizen.

Each offender is unique and will be evaluated on an individual basis. There are no compulsory release criteria that must be followed by the parole panel in every case.

Who is notified about an offender's parole review or release?

Prior to a parole review or an offender's scheduled release, the Parole Division notifies the trial officials (sentencing judge, sheriff, and district attorney) of the county of conviction, the police chiefs of the county of conviction, the county in which the offense was committed (in cases with a change of venue), and the county to which the offender is to be released. Also notified are any victims or others who completed a victim impact statement at the time of trial or who requested notification by telephone or letter (see the Victim Services Division section of the *Parole in Texas* handbook). These parties are notified in advance of the scheduled parole review in order to solicit their comments regarding the individual's release.

All correspondence regarding an offender, whether written in support of or in opposition to parole, will be added to the offender's permanent file and will be available to the parole panel at the time of parole deliberations. [Letters and e-mail received from victims and concerned citizens are confidential. Also, the e-mail address, mailing address, and telephone number of a victim, witness, or other person through whom the victim or witness may be contacted is also privileged and confidential.]

It is important for comments to be submitted in a timely fashion, but if protest letters received after a parole review appear to contain significant information previously unavailable to the parole panel, the case will be submitted to the parole panel for reconsideration in light of the objection. Each objection is carefully weighed on its own merits.

Juror Stress: Observations from Travis County

by Stacy Miles-Thorpe, LCSW
Senior Victim Witness Counselor
Travis County District Attorney's Office

AS A VICTIM WITNESS counselor in a large district attorney's office, I regularly accompany victims and families to trial. Because my interest in victim services is rooted in mental health trauma, I tend to observe all trial participants through that lens. How does it affect my prosecutors to hear so much pain while having to maintain their "game face?" How conflicted is the defendant's family feeling as they sit in the audience and see what their loved one has done to another person? What are the jurors experiencing as they're plucked out of their daily life, exposed to horrible images and barred from processing all they are seeing and hearing until the end of the trial?

This last question is one that particularly piques my interest. Our system relies on the public in critical ways—they elect our public officials, who remain in office by serving the community well. The Grand Jury, composed of citizens, indicts our cases and a trial jury eventually decides guilt or innocence. As much as we rely on the public, only a small percentage of citizens have the opportunity to witness our work. Jury service is largely the basis for the public's impression of our criminal justice system. Those who serve are willing to do their duty and take their role seriously, so I believe we owe it to them to help create as positive an experience as possible. For me, this has come to include providing stress management information and extending an offer of support after our more difficult trials.

Jurors tend to be pretty stoic during a trial. They work hard to remain attentive during long and sometimes tedious testimony. They view brutal crime scene and medical examiner photos without reaction, though occasionally you will see some avert their gaze after the initial glance, or wipe away tears. Those of us in victim services understand secondary trauma and have measures in place to help us process the trauma we witness. Imagine the position of the juror, being unprepared for the exposure to such intense suffering, experiencing the impact of hideous evidence and heart-wrenching testimony, then being released back to your family and your normal life as a receptionist or plumber. A bit of a disconnect? Absolutely!

There were two trials in my court that prompted me to take a closer look at the juror's experience. One was a brutal domestic violence assault in which the defendant on trial beat the victim in the face and head, then strangled her, causing her to lose consciousness. She came to as the defendant was retreating to the kitchen to get a knife, fled to a neighbor's house having lost control of her bladder and with shocking injuries to her face and neck. Her testimony was vivid as was the neighbor's account of her physical and emotional state as she begged him for help. After the jury convicted the defendant, we proceeded to the punishment phase of the trial. The jury then heard of his prior murder conviction, and listened to a 911 call made by the previous victim—his girlfriend who eventually died of multiple stab wounds the defendant inflicted. The jury sentenced him to life, were released from their duty by the judge and stood to exit the courtroom. As they turned to leave the room, two of the jurors burst into tears and sobbed on their way out of the door.

I had assumed that jury service was potentially stressful or even traumatic, but seeing these jurors' distress so clearly convinced me that they deserved support. I imagined the week they spent, seeing the same pictures that so shocked me, hearing the victim's fear and agony that took my breath away, but without the forewarning that I had, and without the understanding that they were going to be affected and might need to process. I could turn to another victim service counselor and say, "Can you believe?! Did you see that? I feel sick, that poor woman!" They, however, are asked to not talk to anyone about the case until the end—not the other jurors, not their friends, or their spouses. What a burden they must have carried during that week before finally being released! No wonder the dam burst when it was over.

Exposure to traumatizing evidence, and the requirement to not process during the course of the trial, will always be a necessary component of jury service, but there is something we can do to support the jurors. Just as we educate and normalize when attending to our victims in crisis, we can do so as well for jurors. I believe that helping them understand how they may be affected by a trial, and reminding them of their coping skills can be tremendously helpful.

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Juror; *continued from page 5*

I developed a letter for jurors that I provide after certain trials, as well as a sheet on stress management that reviews coping skills they can employ after a trial. I also invite them to contact the victim witness division should they need to talk or seek referrals for further support. We have received a few calls from these jurors, and so far what they've asked for is just a phone conversation to help them process. It is my hope that normalizing any secondary trauma symptoms they may experience can help them understand the intrusive thoughts or exhaustion that jurors sometimes feel. This can prompt them to take action to support positive coping. Those that have a severe reaction will have an avenue for seeking appropriate treatment, facilitated by our victim counselors.

The second trial that I referred to occurred after I began providing the letters and information pages and involved defendant Laura Hall. The defendant had been accused and found guilty of tampering with physical evidence in 2007 after she helped to dismember the body of a young woman who had been murdered. The defendant appealed her case, and the appellate court upheld her conviction. The punishment, however, was thrown out, resulting in a re-trial of the punishment phase in 2010. As I attended the trial with the family of the victim, I also watched the jury, wondering about the emotional impact to them as they viewed graphic photos, heard gruesome testimony, and witnessed the pain of the family in the front row.

The judge spent a considerable amount of time in the jury room after the trial, allowing the jury to process, answering their questions and expressing appreciation for their service. Our bailiff handed jurors the information packets I put together for them and they filed out, visibly exhausted. In the weeks that followed I considered their experience and hoped they were helped by the care we took with them.

Several weeks later I ran into one of the jurors out in public and she was eager to share with me her experience of going through that trial. I asked her first what it was like to go through the week hearing what she did, but being unable to talk with anyone about it. She told me, "The first day of the trial, I came home exhausted. The second day, I was so overwhelmed I couldn't even speak to my friends or my husband. By the third day, my husband confronted me by asking me what was wrong. I bit his head off, 'WHAT DO YOU THINK IS WRONG?!?!'" This juror happened to be seeing a counselor fairly regularly before the trial began, but related that it took three counseling sessions before she could tell her therapist about the images and the testimony she had been carrying with her since the trial. She didn't want to traumatize anyone else.

I observed that she seemed very light-hearted now and asked her what eventually helped. She related that she did work through her feelings with her therapist, who encouraged her to use her talent as an artist to help her heal. She used a large artist sketch pad to draw a particular image that remained with her from the trial, and wrote out the lines of testimony that continued to haunt her. "Then I tore it to pieces, put it in an old coffee can, took a hammer and just beat the hell out of the coffee can. I threw it in the trash and even watched as the garbage truck hauled it off," she said with a laugh. She related that talking to her counselor, along with this symbolic act, had unburdened her and allowed her to move forward.

There are three components of jury stress management I consider critical. The first is jury orientation before and during the trial, to help them understand what to expect and to prepare them for the presentation of graphic evidence. Next, I would recommend for every judge in every trial to spend time with the jury in the jury room allowing them to process what they experienced and answering their questions. The 30 minutes our judge spends with jurors helps them transition from the trial back to their daily lives. Lastly, we should educate jurors on the possibility of lingering thoughts or feelings about the trial, reassure them that this is normal and offer further assistance if necessary.

If you're interested in further reading on jury stress, there are some resources I would recommend. One is a manual called *Through the Eyes of the Juror: a Manual for Addressing Juror Stress*, which is a study on the impact of jury duty on jurors and includes suggestions for addressing their stress. There is also an evaluation of an innovative jury debriefing program conducted in King County in Washington State called *King County Superior Court Evaluation of the Jury Debriefing Program: Final Report*. Both are available online. I would be pleased to send a copy of my jury letter and stress management page if anyone else would like to use or adapt it for your court. You are welcome to email me at stacy.miles-thorpe@co.travis.tx.us or call 512-854-4793.

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NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHT WEEK
APRIL 10-16, 2011

As part of the Travis County National Crime Victims' Rights Week area event on April 14, 2011, Claudia Daniels of MADD Texas made this beautiful version of the scales of justice. The hands at the bottom represent a claymaker's hands, to reflect the Reshaping the Future theme of the event. On the scale trays are bricks. The bricks have different crimes etched on one side and state agency or victim advocacy organization names on the other. During the event, the agencies and organizations had a representative who moved his or her agency or organziation's brick from one side of the scales to the other, thereby "tipping" the scales of justice. The scales were displayed at the State Capitol from April 19th through April 24th in the North Gallery of the Capitol.

Mike Jones

Left to right: Elva Gonzalez, Director of Programs and Services, Hays-Caldwell Women's Center, San Marcos; Melinda Cantu, Shelter Director, SafePlace, Austin; and Sue Snyder, Counseling Manager, SafePlace, Austin.

Very often, the most simple notions are also the most eloquent. During the Texas National Crime Victims' Rights Week event in Austin, there was a recognition luncheon for victim advocates who exemplify what it means to work for victims and victim rights. Elva Gonzalez, Melinda Cantu, and Sue Snyder were recognized for their work with victims of domestic violence. While speaking for the group, Melinda Cantu said they often are asked how they and their colleagues keep doing the work they do for so long. To this, she replies, "Because we can, and because we should."

Parole Officer; *continued from page 2*

with yellow lines, were five offenders waiting to see different unit staff. On the units, walkways and waiting areas for offenders are marked with yellow lines; there is no talking in these areas. It was "count time" on the unit, and no one was going anywhere until every offender was accounted for. It was also lunch time. After several minutes the offender dining hall doors opened, and people started moving around again. Some offenders who were scheduled to see Ms. Vital arrived and took their places in the designated area. One approached Ms. Vital without being called. Bad move. He was quickly sent to the back of the line.

The offenders waiting to see Ms. Vital also were on parole when they received new convictions. Some already had their revocation hearings; others were given the option to waive or proceed with upcoming hearings. One offender's parole had been revoked, while another was able to continue his parole. That offender who had been sent to the back of the line was discharging from his new sentence the next day. Ms. Vital told him to report to the parole office "upon" release. He spent a few futile moments trying to express his interpretation of "upon" to Ms. Vital. She didn't buy it. After this we left the unit and headed to the Beaumont District Parole Office. During the day we would climb and descend the parole office building's staircase many times.

Ms. Vital reminds me a lot of my sister, who is a middle school teacher. It was apparent to me early on that it doesn't take very long for Ms. Vital, like my sister, to figure out when an excuse is a whole lot of rubbish. I think her parolees know this as well. Throughout the day, Ms. Vital and I saw fifteen offenders: some were wearing prison whites, others street clothes, and the last two were in county jail orange. It didn't matter, though, what they wore. It was apparent these men had a lot of respect for Ms. Vital. All day long it was, "Yes, Ms. Vital; No, Ms. Vital …"

At the parole office we were to see three offenders. Each offender was asked if his parole and restitution payments were current and to show us his payment receipts. Ms. Vital asked each offender if he was attending substance abuse classes. Does he have a job, and if so, does he have verification of his employment? If not, does he have verification that he is looking for a job? (Ms. Vital had a ready list of places in and around Beaumont that were hiring.) Has he had any contact with alcohol or drugs or any negative contacts with law enforcement? Any changes since his last visit?

Our first offender was doing a lengthy sentence for a "3g" offense and had been on parole for five years. (See page 14 for a definition of "3g" offenses.) He had followed the rules and was now reporting at the lowest level allowed for these offenders. He was telling Ms. Vital that he had a job opportunity in Colorado. She said that the out-of-state employment could be approved, but he still had to report to her in person in Beaumont on schedule.

The next offender was given the same series of questions. "Yes, Ms. Vital; No, Ms. Vital …" He has a life sentence, which means he is under TDCJ custody, whether in prison or on parole, as long as he lives. He also had been reporting at the lowest level, which for him had meant once a year. Unfortunately, he recently had been arrested for a DWI, so he was now on a strict reporting schedule. He also had to submit to urine analysis (UA) to screen for drug and alcohol use. There are two small lavatories in the parole office for administering the UAs; a parole officer always accompanies each offender into the lavatory to witness the event, and the analysis is done on the spot.

The last offender to come see Ms. Vital was coming in for a case conference. This means he had failed to comply with some of the conditions of his parole, so he had to report to Ms. Vital and her unit supervisor, Ms. Bridget Johnson. As we walked toward Ms. Johnson's office, it felt like we were going to the principal's office—not that I know anything about that. Ms. Johnson asked the offender about his violations and why he was having trouble keeping up with the conditions of his parole. It no longer felt like the principal's office, but instead it was like having a pair of moms grilling him. He had no excuses either, and Ms. Johnson and Ms. Vital were trying very hard to impress upon him that it was up to him to correct his negative ways:

"You don't have a job?" Ms. Johnson asked.

"No, ma'am," (Ms. Vital knows who is hiring.)

"Looking for a job?"

"No, ma'am."

"It's on you, you know," Ms. Johnson added. "You're not going to school? Working on your GED?"

"No, ma'am."

"You've got a baby on the way. It's on you."

"Yes, ma'am." And so it goes.

It's a documented sanction. If he continues to ignore Ms. Vital and violate the conditions of his parole, then his ability to stay on parole will be in jeopardy. Incidentally, a history of drug and alcohol

abuse and a lack of education were the two most common issues facing everyone we saw that day. At lunch I sent my son a text message: "You are finishing college!" I'm sure he wonders where that came from.

Ms. Vital and I had a quick lunch, and we were off to conduct three home visits. These were routine follow-up visits to where the offenders live. During an initial home visit, the entire residence is checked out thoroughly for signs of problems such as alcohol or drug use or other contraband. Sex offenders' homes are checked every time for banned items. Some sex offenders' homes are also checked on Halloween to make sure they have their lights off and are not trying to hand out treats.

Normally, parole officers make home visits in their personal vehicles and then are reimbursed for the mileage driven. Since I was a guest, Ms. Vital reserved the parole office's state vehicle for us to use.

During the home visits, Ms. Vital asked the same battery of questions as with the office visits. She also asked the offenders' family members who were there how the offenders were doing. One of the offenders had a job; the other two did not. (Ms. Vital reminded them who was hiring in the Beaumont area.) One of the two who did not have jobs is around thirty, although he looks much younger. He is six foot seven! With reflex timing, he ducked his head every time he went through the doorway between the living and dining rooms. He was nervous and antsy while Ms. Vital was there. He had a new baby, and showed us a photo of the little round cherub. The pediatrician told him that they were feeding her too much. Ms. Vital and I concurred. The offender was on parole for a drug possession offense; he says he is trying to get his GED and a job.

Our last two visits for the day were at the Jefferson County jail complex. Two offenders who had been reporting to Ms. Vital had new convictions. One was looking at three years in prison; the other at a state jail conviction. At the jail we had to wait. It was the first time since that morning at the Gist unit that I wasn't trying to keep up with Ms. Vital. We had to wait some more. Ms. Vital told me that some months before an offender had attempted suicide at the jail during a parole revocation hearing. Since then the jail facility had revised many of their policies, which was part of the reason why we had to wait. We were in a room that was about four feet wide and ten feet long. There was a tiny desk and three plastic chairs. I propped myself up in a tiny corner of the room. We waited some more.

Finally the first offender was brought to us. He was in handcuffs and belly chains. He sat in the chair across the tiny desk from Ms. Vital. He was waiving his right to a revocation hearing, and she had him sign the paperwork. It did not appear to be easy to handle a pen while wearing jail hardware. He had pleaded to a new three-year sentence. He had been at the county jail for nine months, so, in his mind he was figuring to be out in fifteen months, counting his time served and his "short way" date. That is, when his good time and his calendar time equal his sentence, he'll be eligible for mandatory release on the new conviction. He still has to wait and see what the BPP decides about his parole status on his old conviction.

When this visit is done, a corrections officer comes to take him away. He shuffles and clinks out the door. After a few minutes, the next offender shuffles and clinks in. The door locks behind him as he sits in the plastic chair. Ms. Vital tells him that his parole has been continued while he goes to "Safe-P." That's a Substance Abuse Felony Punishment facility (SAFPF). I notice two tear-drop tattoos under one of his eyes. This offender also has a new baby. He says he's got to get himself right; it's not just about him anymore. He thanks Ms. Vital and seems to appreciate that he's been given a break. I wonder if he'll turn himself around.

For all of the men we saw that day, I wonder if they would be different men under different circumstances. I also wonder how they act when Ms. Vital is not around, like when the teacher turns her back, so to speak. Ms. Vital, like her colleagues, has a tough job. Day in and day out, she is working with a large number of convicted offenders, so there is always risk. As much as the law allows, I believe Ms. Vital cares about the people she supervises and wants them to be successful.

It was now 5:15 pm. I was tired and had a long drive back to Austin. Ms. Vital had reports to complete. She has to document everything she does with all her offenders. The reports will wait until tomorrow morning; right now she has baseball practice to coach. I can almost picture it: "Keep your eye on the ball; just make contact."

"Yes, Ms. Vital."

Trafficking; *continued from front page*

bed, blanket or pillow. It was air conditioned and they kept the room so cold that I thought I was going to freeze to death. After arriving at the house, the woman who seemed to be in charge, came into my room and told me that I needed to look pretty. She took off my clothes and put me in a dress. She rubbed makeup on my face and then took me into another room that had a bed. A man entered the room and gave her money. She closed the door and locked me in the room with him. I tried to fight him off but he was so much larger than I was, he easily overpowered me and raped me while I cried.

I was bleeding and I was scared that I was going to die. The woman in charge of the house checked me over, said I was fine and took money from the next man and locked me back up in the room where I was raped again. This went on every day for three months. The torture and abuse I experienced is difficult for me to describe and I don't like to think about it because it makes me so scared and sad. Every day for three months, several times a day, I was sold for sex. Sometimes more than one man raped me at the same time. If I tried to scream they gagged my mouth. Sometimes they took photographs of me being raped.

Once I ran toward the door to try and escape but they caught me. They beat me severely and didn't give me anything to eat for several days as additional punishment. Mostly I was given just rice with very hot chile to eat. Sometimes they gave me some beans. At night, they added a drug to my water to make me sleep.

They contacted my family and told them that they had to send $5000 for my release or else they were going to kill me. Finally, my family borrowed the money and sent it so that they would let me go. One night several of the men came to my room and one told me, "You are never leaving—even if your family pays. We're going to sell you and we've already made the arrangements in Hidalgo." They took me outside to a car and locked me in the trunk. I was scared and it was difficult to breath. I was in that trunk until the next day driving to Hidalgo. Immigration officials stopped the car in the US and finally, someone found me in the trunk.

Although they could see I was hurt, bruised and with bite marks all over my body they took me to immigration detention. They asked me a lot of questions and promised me that if I helped them that they would help me with my immigration application. I told them the truth and gave as much detail as I could—telling them where the house was where they'd locked me up and describing the different people who kidnapped me, enslaved me and sold me for sex. I did not know who they had sold me to in Hidalgo but I gave them as much information as I could. They videotaped my story and told me it would help to put the bad men that they'd caught in jail so I didn't have to worry about them. I told them there were more men than just the few that they'd caught and they had my personal papers and knew where my family was so I was still very scared. After they got my testimony, immigration officials sent me to the detention facility in Pearsall, 60 miles south of San Antonio.

When they found me in the trunk of the car, initially I could not speak and I am still very afraid of men. I was later hospitalized in San Antonio because of my fear and depression. I was afraid no one would help me and I would be sent back to Honduras where those evil men would find me and kill me like they'd promised.

After being detained for nearly six months, Sophia, another inmate in Pearsall, called the Catholic Charities Immigration Department in San Antonio for me. She spoke to the Office Manager, Yvonne, who politely explained that their office did not have funding to serve the detained population, but she could make a referral to a person at another agency in San Antonio who was at that facility every week. Fortunately for me, Sophia did not give up so easily and she insisted that someone had to come to talk to me because of what I had suffered. Two days later, Linda, the Director of Immigration, came to see me in Pearsall. She was so nice and encouraging and she spent almost two hours with me while I told her my story of how I came to the United States and what I had endured. That was the first time that anyone told me I was a trafficking victim … someone who was in the U.S. because of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of making money. She explained all of the benefits that I would get and gave me hope that I could heal after this horrible experience. She told me that someone would come to interview me again so that I could qualify for these benefits.

A week or so later, I was surprised that a woman brought a man with her to interview me. Even the staff at the detention facility kept men away from me because they knew the trauma I had suffered. I was already afraid of men so I was nervous during the interview and did not feel comfortable at all. They

only spent about twenty minutes with me and only asked me yes or no questions. Several weeks later, Linda came back to visit me and explained that she could not convince the trafficking experts to certify me as a trafficking victim. In fact she was told that I did "not meet the regulatory elements of a T-visa" because I said that I wanted to come to the United States to be with my husband. Linda explained to me that just because I consented to come here that did NOT mean I was not a trafficking victim. She said that it was like telling a woman suffering domestic violence that she is not a victim because she "wanted" to get married! She explained to me that since the experts would not certify me that the process would take longer than she had hoped. I became so depressed at this news that I tried to commit suicide by cutting my wrists and I was again hospitalized in San Antonio.

A nurse at the hospital called the Embassy for Hope Center and spoke to Elizabeth, the Director, to let her know she had found a trafficking victim. When Linda came to visit me at the hospital, she assured me that she would take my case personally and would do everything she could for me. She met with Elizabeth and they worked together on my case. Immigration officials released me to Linda without a bond and she took vacation time and flew me out to California to be with my husband. It was difficult at first because he did not know what had happened to me and it was very difficult for me to describe. For the past two years, I have often been crying. I would wake up screaming and I was always afraid that I would be deported back to Honduras. Linda arranged for another attorney with the Immigrant Rights Project in Los Angeles to go with me to court in California and explain to the judge that I was a trafficking victim and an application was pending. I have to thank Talia for helping me with court!

Two weeks ago, Linda called me to share the exciting news that my trafficking visa had been approved and that I would not be deported. For the first time in years, that night I slept soundly and I finally feel safe. Now I qualify for the benefits Linda told me about two years ago like medical care and counseling which I desperately need. Now I can finally begin to heal.

I still wonder why these evil people treated me like an object—using me, beating me, selling me. I am afraid that they are still doing it to other women. If it had not been for immigration officials stopping the car that day, if I were still alive, I would still be locked up somewhere in South Texas, being beaten and raped while someone made money from my pain.

The day that Linda called me with the news that the government recognized that I was a trafficking victim, I was so relieved and we both cried. I have told Linda that she is my guardian angel. She was the only one who believed me, who has stayed with me over the past two years, who has encouraged me and has given me the strength to carry on when I was ready to give up on life. I cannot thank Catholic Charities Immigration Department enough. Even though I know that they do not serve the detained population, I am especially grateful to Yvonne, the Office Manager, who heard this story and convinced Linda to come and meet with me.

Linda is now working on rescuing my two small children from Honduras because I still fear that the traffickers will find them and hurt or kill them like they threatened. This country is my new home. It was a difficult journey to get here but I am thankful for the opportunity to heal and be a family again. And, I want to be a voice for other trafficking victims who do not understand this system, who do not find Linda or someone like her who will fight for them especially when the experts turn them down and do not believe they meet the requirements to be considered a trafficking victim. There are many many victims like me out there and they all need help.

Thanks to the generous support from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Catholic Charities Immigration Department is able to serve immigrant victims of crime, domestic violence, human trafficking and abused, abandoned and neglected children.

Seen on a bumper sticker in Austin:
Get involved!
The world is run by those
who show up!

CO; *continued from page 3*

be placed in a more restrictive custody level. If he complies with the rules, he will be assigned a less restrictive custody level.

The COs on the pods are equipped with carry-on-person chemical agents, handcuffs, a radio, and a Personal Distress Pendant (body alarm). An activated alarm notifies other staff of an emergency and provides the COs location. COs assigned to work in restrictive custody level housing areas must wear thrust vests, a type of body armor worn to protect against stabbing attacks. 3-Bldg, like most unit housing areas, is not air conditioned and cool days are welcomed. 3-Bldg is a very hot and humid place on August afternoons.

On the 3-Bldg desk is a host of manuals, a phone, an intercom system, and a lighting control panel. I stopped counting pretty early on how often Officer Rodriguez was on the phone: asking and answering questions, directing staff, and calling in count, all while checking out and logging in equipment to the other COs. Behind the desk is a metal storage cabinet containing additional equipment.

There is always offender movement, from one cell to another, from one building to another, and from one unit to another. Offenders are not housed at random. Many factors, such as age and size, custody and medical restrictions are considered when making housing assignments.

After the COs report to their posts, Officer Rodriguez settles in at the desk with me trying to stay out of the way. Almost immediately I have to witness my first strip-search of the day. A group of six offenders are going out to the recreation yard. Officer Rodriguez leaves the desk and goes to the exit area by A-Pod. The offenders are waiting, single-file behind a yellow line. Every piece of clothing comes off and is closely inspected by Officer Rodriguez.

The first count time is announced for the shift. Count time is serious and has a significant level of anxiety. Every offender is counted wherever he is on the unit. All offender movement stops until count is cleared. On the pods, one CO looks in every cell window and counts how many offenders are in the cell. Everyone in a shower or in the day rooms is counted. Another CO takes a second count. Officer Rodriguez counts offenders on the recreation yard and offenders waiting to leave the building. The COs from the pods bring their count sheets to Officer Rodriguez for verification. When the count for 3-Bldg is verified, Officer Rodriguez calls in the number. His count is verified, and the count sheets are taken to the count room. When the unit count is cleared, all activity resumes.

At 07:30 there is a lot of movement and the phone is ringing. Officer Rodriguez says that the most important trait for the desk assignment is the ability to multitask, and I believe it. To work the desk you also must be very familiar with the unit schedules and procedures applicable to the multiple custody levels. Different custody levels have a wide array of privileges and restrictions. The offenders wear different color arm bands to designate their housing areas. COs on the unit can easily recognize the bands and know when an offender is out of place. Being out of place can be a serious breach of unit security.

A number of offenders from all three pods are behind the yellow lines waiting to leave. Others are waiting for haircuts; a small group returns to 3-Bldg. Officer Rodriguez sends one offender back to his cell to shave. The lines at B-Pod and C-Pod are growing with offenders heading out to work in the unit laundry. At 07:50 the lines release; for the moment the area around 3-Bldg desk is empty, except for Officer Rodriguez, two janitors, and me.

At 08:20 the radio Officer Rodriguez has comes to life. There is a use of force incident on one of the other pods. Supervisors as well as medical staff are en route to respond to the situation. When the situation is under control, operations resume.

During the day, Officer Rodriguez and I went to 8-Bldg; which houses the aggressive and chronic disciplinary offenders. All staff on 8-Bldg wear thrust vests. The Hughes unit has a maximum custody housing area called Administrative Segregation, which houses violent offenders, confirmed gang members, and escape risks. These offenders are in their cells 23 hours a day. They have no contact with other offenders. When they leave their cells, they are handcuffed and escorted by correctional staff.

Each housing area has a sergeant assigned to perform a check of security and procedure protocol. This process is completed several times throughout the shift by a ranking supervisor. Procedure and a chain of command are strictly followed to accomplish the missions and provide necessary security. Offenders have a lot of time to contemplate how to manipulate the system to acquire contraband. Some contraband items may be considered dangerous or create dangerous situations. Frequent strip searches are conducted to eliminate introduction of contraband throughout the unit.

A CO from the Safe Prisons Office enters 3-Bldg (see page 14). The CO is here to interview and investigate an al-

legation that an offender is trying to manipulate a housing change.

It is count time again, movement ceases ... count clears. Officer Rodriguez begins sending the COs, one at a time, to take their lunch breaks. When everyone has had his or her lunch break, Officer Rodriguez will take his turn. That means I'm going to be hungry for awhile. COs on the Hughes unit, work 12 hour shifts; four days on and four days off. They get one, 30 minute break for lunch. Many bring their own lunches; for those who don't, there is the ODR (Officer Dining Room). The food served here is the same served to the offenders.

Officer Rodriguez brings his own lunch, but takes me to the ODR. I had a quick lunch of rice, beans, and meatloaf. The rice and beans were as good as any mom ever made; the meatloaf not so much. I didn't go for the pork tips and gravy.

Around lunch time the overall mood of 3-Bldg seemed to go sour. Suddenly, offenders started complaining to Officer Rodriguez about their issues. The whole time Officer Rodriguez is firm but calm. Each offender is handled in a professional and appropriate manner. It's about respect, according to Officer Rodriguez. COs must earn the offenders' respect; offenders must earn the COs' respect.

As all of this is happening, a problem erupts in B-Pod. There is a lot of loud arguing. Offenders in the section are gathering around to watch the commotion. The second B-Pod rover responds and enters the dayroom with Officer Rodriguez; everyone in the section except the two upset offenders are "racked up" (ordered to their cells and the cell doors closed). Again, Officer Rodriguez calmly, firmly handles the situation and the pod routine is restored. We return to the desk just in time to begin sending large numbers of offenders out for lunch. Offenders get 25 minutes to eat meals in the offender dining rooms. When they return I'm standing at the desk with Officer Rodriguez. I quickly learn why we are standing there. As an offender passes us, Officer Rodriguez calls him over and lifts the offender's green TDCJ-issued jacket. Under the jacket, the offender has stowed a ten pound bag of powdered milk, stolen from the kitchen. Officer Rodriguez confiscates the contraband and will write up a disciplinary case on the offender. A few minutes later, Officer Rodriguez calls over another offender. This one has a plastic jar of mayonnaise and again it is confiscated. I have no idea how he knew that these offenders where trying to get away with something, but it is clear to me that Officer Rodriguez and his coworkers take these issues seriously.

When all the offenders get back to 3-Pod, it's count time again. This time I make the rounds with Officer Rodriguez to show me how he does the count for A-Pod. We look in every cell window on the first floor. In one cell there is an offender completely covered by a blanket. Officer Rodriguez calls, "bottom bunk!" and bangs on the metal door. The offender acknowledges. Count continues up the stairs to the second tier, then the third. We repeat this for the other two sections. After Officer Rodriguez verifies the count for 3-Bldg, we take it to the count room. He then escorts me to the warden's office. I thank him for allowing me to be a part of his day. He goes back to 3-Bldg, and I head for the main gate and my return to Austin.

Although my day has ended, Officer Rodriguez will return to his assignment and continue his duties until the end of the shift at 18:00 hours.

In my work with Victim Services Division, I have had the opportunity to work with correctional staff on many units. But this was the first time I have been exposed to the jobs they perform and their working conditions. From the time I first met Officer Rodriguez until I walked off the unit, he was professional and consistent in his manner with the offenders as well as with his colleagues.

Although I believe I have now seen as many strip searches of old, out of shape, tattooed, men as I care to, it was a very interesting day for me. It was a privilege for me to have "worked" with Officer Rodriguez on this typical day. If I were a CO, I would have no problem having Officer Rodriguez watch my back.

Upcoming Events

National Center for Victims of Crime
2011 National Conference
June 20-22, 2011
Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

National Organization for Victim Assistance
37th NOVA Conference
August 14-17, 2011
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown

Office of the Texas Attorney General
Crime Victim Services Conference
November 14-16, 2011
The Westin Galleria Houston

"3g" Offenses

"3g" offenses, as they are called, are those crimes named in the Texas *Code of Criminal Procedure* § 42.12 Sec. 3(g). These crimes have been singled out by the legislature as deserving special treatment (read: harsher, more inflexible punishment).

Murder, Capital Murder, Indecency with a Child, Aggravated Kidnapping, Sexual Assault, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Aggravated Robbery, offenses under the Controlled Substances Act involving use of a child or a second Drug Free Zone offense, Injury to a Child, Injury to an Elderly Person, Injury to a Disabled Person, Sexual Performance by a Child, or offenses where there is a finding of a Deadly Weapon.

Those sentenced to prison time on a 3g charge are not eligible for parole until the actual time served equals one-half of the sentence imposed or 30 years, whichever is less, without consideration of any good conduct time, and cannot be paroled until they have served two years even if the prison sentence was less than four years.

Safe Prisons

In September 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was signed into law. PREA is a federal mandate of "Zero Tolerance" to sexual assaults on a national forum. PREA is the first national law to be passed addressing sexual assault behind bars. The law was passed unanimously and quickly by both Houses of Congress and signed into law by President Bush. Some of the components of PREA include: establish a zero-tolerance standard for the incidence of rape in prisons in the United States; make the prevention of prison rape a top priority in each prison system; develop and implement national standards for the detection, prevention, reduction, and punishment of prison rape; and increase the availability of data and information about the incidence of prison rape.

Prior to the passage of PREA, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) had implemented several policies and procedures concerning offender-on-offender sexual assaults in correctional facilities. Many of these policies addressed areas of prevention, detection, reporting, and prosecution.

In October 2003, the Safe Prisons Program Management Office was created. It is a department within the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division (CID) that is supervised by the Safe Prisons Program manager, who reports to the TDCJ CID director. The TDCJ CID director is the Safe Prisons coordinator; he reports to the TDCJ executive director. The purpose of the Safe Prisons Program Management Office was initially to consolidate the existing agency policies and procedures for preventing offender-on-offender sexual assaults into a cohesive Safe Prisons Plan and a "Zero Tolerance" policy concerning the detection, prevention, and punishment of sexual abuse, to include consensual sexual contact while in TDCJ custody. TDCJ implemented the Safe Prisons Plan in 2005 and has since carried it forth to include preventing and limiting other acts of offender-on-offender aggression or violence (those acts that are frequently precursors to sexual assault).

The TDCJ PREA ombudsman position was created by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007. It is separate from the Safe Prisons Program Management Office and reports directly to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. Although the Safe Prisons Program Management Office handles day-to-day operations, much of the job of the PREA ombudsman is to monitor those efforts. The job is twofold: not only does the PREA ombudsman and staff oversee administrative investigations of offender allegations of sexual assault, but they also serve as the office to respond to public inquiries dealing with sexual assault allegations as well.

Mike Jones

Scenes from the Bexar County National Crime Victims' Rights Week event, April 28, 2011. Left to right: A few of the many wreaths displayed; members of Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA); and flags of the Bexar County Sheriff's Office Color Guard.

Victim Assistance Resource Directory

THE Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse asks for your help in updating our online Victim Assistance Resource Directory. The Resource Directory, which is searchable by county, is a comprehensive listing of programs and services available to crime victims in Texas.

If your organization is listed on the Resource Directory, please go to www.tdcj.texas.gov/victim/victim-home.htm. and verify that the information is correct. If we need to make revisions, complete the form below and return to the TxCVC. If your organization is not listed on the resource directory, return the form, and we'll add it. Please offer the form to other victim service organizations in your community, so we may add them as well. Help us make the Resource Directory as informative, current, and accurate as possible, so that victims and victim service providers will be aware of all the services available to them in their local communities and in the state of Texas.

Please return to:
TDCJ-Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd, Suite 265, Austin, TX 78757-6899. Fax: 512-452-0825. You also may contact us at 512-406-5931 or via e-mail at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov.

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Business Phone:

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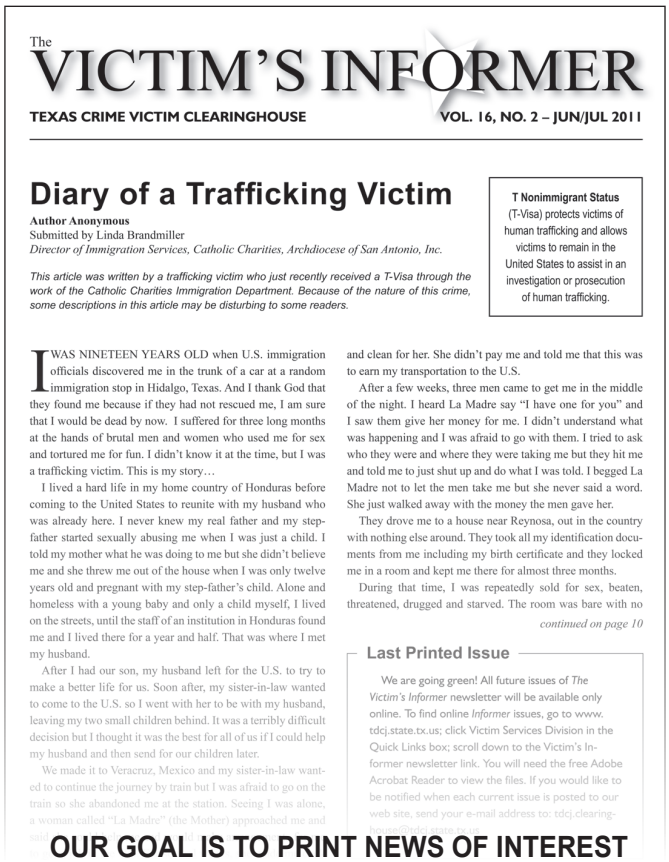

The VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE VOL. 16, NO. 2 – JUN/JUL 2011

Diary of a Trafficking Victim

Author Anonymous
Submitted by Linda Brandmiller
Director of Immigration Services, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc.

This article was written by a trafficking victim who just recently received a T-Visa through the work of the Catholic Charities Immigration Department. Because of the nature of this crime, some descriptions in this article may be disturbing to some readers.

T Nonimmigrant Status
(T-Visa) protects victims of human trafficking and allows victims to remain in the United States to assist in an investigation or prosecution of human trafficking.

I WAS NINETEEN YEARS OLD when U.S. immigration officials discovered me in the trunk of a car at a random immigration stop in Hidalgo, Texas. And I thank God that they found me because if they had not rescued me, I am sure that I would be dead by now. I suffered for three long months at the hands of brutal men and women who used me for sex and tortured me for fun. I didn't know it at the time, but I was a trafficking victim. This is my story…

I lived a hard life in my home country of Honduras before coming to the United States to reunite with my husband who was already here. I never knew my real father and my stepfather started sexually abusing me when I was just a child. I told my mother what he was doing to me but she didn't believe me and she threw me out of the house when I was only twelve years old and pregnant with my step-father's child. Alone and homeless with a young baby and only a child myself, I lived on the streets, until the staff of an institution in Honduras found me and I lived there for a year and half. That was where I met my husband.

After I had our son, my husband left for the U.S. to try to make a better life for us. Soon after, my sister-in-law wanted to come to the U.S. so I went with her to be with my husband, leaving my two small children behind. It was a terribly difficult decision but I thought it was the best for all of us if I could help my husband and then send for our children later.

We made it to Veracruz, Mexico and my sister-in-law wanted to continue the journey by train but I was afraid to go on the train so she abandoned me at the station. Seeing I was alone, a woman called "La Madre" (the Mother) approached me and

and clean for her. She didn't pay me and told me that this was to earn my transportation to the U.S.

After a few weeks, three men came to get me in the middle of the night. I heard La Madre say "I have one for you" and I saw them give her money for me. I didn't understand what was happening and I was afraid to go with them. I tried to ask who they were and where they were taking me but they hit me and told me to just shut up and do what I was told. I begged La Madre not to let the men take me but she never said a word. She just walked away with the money the men gave her.

They drove me to a house near Reynosa, out in the country with nothing else around. They took all my identification documents from me including my birth certificate and they locked me in a room and kept me there for almost three months.

During that time, I was repeatedly sold for sex, beaten, threatened, drugged and starved. The room was bare with no

continued on page 10

Last Printed Issue

We are going green! All future issues of *The Victim's Informer* newsletter will be available only online. To find online *Informer* issues, go to www.tdcj.state.tx.us; click Victim Services Division in the Quick Links box; scroll down to the Victim's Informer newsletter link. You will need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the files. If you would like to be notified when each current issue is posted to our web site, send your e-mail address to: tdcj.clearing-

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

The Victim's Informer newsletter is published quarterly. Articles, meeting notices, and other submissions should be sent to TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd, Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757-6899; faxed to 512-452-0825; or e-mailed to tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. For questions or comments, please call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

Please Note:
The Victim's Informer newsletter is available online. Send your e-mail address to: tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov; we will notify you when the current issue is available and send you the link to the web page. Or you can find online *Informer* issues at www.tdcj.texas.gov; click Victim Services Division in the Quick Links box; scroll down to the Victim's Informer newsletter link. You will need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the files.

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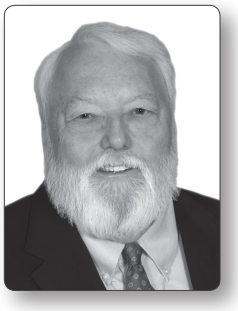

Senior Criminal District Judge Appointed to Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Originally appeared in the May/Jun issue of *Connections* newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

GOVERNOR RICK PERRY in March announced the appointment of Judge Larry Gist of Beaumont to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ). He replaces Pastor Charles Lewis Jackson of Houston on the nine-member board which oversees the operations of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Judge Gist is a Senior Criminal District Judge in Beaumont and has served as a member and chairman of the Judicial Advisory Council, whose role is to advise the agency and TBCJ on matters of interest to the judiciary. He received a bachelor's degree in business administration from the Universityof Notre Dame and a J.D. from the University of Texas Law School. He is a frequent lecturer to local, state, national, and international groups and conferences on criminal law issues and has served on a variety of task forces, committees and boards addressing a range of legal issues.

Gov. Perry also announced the reappointments of Thomas Mechler of Amarillo and Leopoldo Vasquez III of Houston. All three appointments are for terms to expire February 1, 2017.