The
VICTIM'S INFORMER
TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE
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THIRTY YEARS:
RESTORING THE BALANCE OF JUSTICE

Angie McCown, Director of Victim Services Division

This year during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the passage of historic legislation. In 1984 President Ronald Reagan signed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) establishing the crime victims' fund made up of federal criminal fines, penalties, and bond forfeitures, to support state victim compensation and local victim assistance programs. In addition, he signed the Justice Assistance Act, which established a financial assistance program for state and local government and provided funding that year for 200 new victim service programs.

Also in 1984, the Missing Children's Assistance Act mandated the establishment of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as the national resource agency for missing children. The Task Force on Family Violence presented its report to the U.S. Attorney General with recommendations for action, including improving the criminal justice system's response to battered women and establishing prevention and awareness activities, education and training, and data collection and reporting. The National Minimum Drinking Age Act of 1984 was enacted, providing strong incentives to states to raise the minimum age for drinking to 21, saving thousands of young lives in years to come.

Congress also passed the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which earmarked federal funding for programs serving victims of domestic violence. Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) was organized at the first police survivors' seminar held in Washington, DC, by 110 relatives of officers killed in the line of duty. A victim/witness notification system was established within the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Victim Witness Coordinator positions were established in the U.S. Attorneys' Offices within the U.S. Department of Justice. California State University, Fresno, initiated the first Victim Services Certificate Program offered for academic credit by a university. The National Victims Resource Center, now named the Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center (OVCRC), was established to serve as a clearinghouse for victim related publications and other resources.

For the last three decades, these 1984 milestones have paved the way for restoring the balance of justice for crime victims. The funding of crime victims' compensation and victim assistance programs through VOCA has allowed families in Texas and across our nation, who are touched by violent crime, to receive necessary resources and services. As we mark this historic National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 6-12, 2014, 30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice, let us continue to look forward, identifying the challenges ahead in the journey to bring justice to crime victims.

The
VICTIM'S INFORMER

PASSING THE TORCH

In future issues, the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) will publish a series of articles from seasoned victim services professionals who are retiring—or realigning, as Karen Kalergis would say—to share their insight with those that are new or still working in victim services.

by Dr. Jennie Barr

I came to victim services by a non-traditional path. After recently retiring after 13 years from the Office of the Attorney General Crime Victim Services Division, I had the opportunity to look back and see the journey that brought me here. A quote from Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead came to mind - "what a long, strange (wonderful) trip it's been." By sharing my journey, I hope each of you may see yourselves, your path to victim services, how you define victim services and your role in it, and how you stay focused and healthy for the duration. It is a love and a passion for walking a sacred path with those on a journey not of their choosing. Your presence is often their peace.

Before the field of victim services was actually 'formalized,' I did not really know that I was doing 'direct victim services' over those many years leading to my work with the State Crisis Consortium and the position at the Office of the Attorney General. It was the late 1970s in Lubbock, Texas, and a group of interested women came together for a brief training on working with victims of domestic violence. We volunteered to be on-call if the need arose that a woman in an abusive situation called a hotline and needed to get out quickly. There was no shelter or residential program. Later as a licensed marriage and family therapist, I saw clients who were crime victims – particularly victims of domestic violence or adult survivors of sexual abuse – and helped them on their journey of healing and regaining strength and resiliency. Although the timing of my work with them was not on the front end, at the time of the crime or soon thereafter, it was a significant phase in their process.

The transition to more direct victim services came through my clinical work and through disaster response. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and fires were frequent in California, but criminal mass

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The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is proud to provide you with an email notification service. Email notifications may be retrieved directly from your computer, mobile device, or wherever internet access is available. Email notifications are time sensitive and notify you of changes in an offender's status.

Being a current Victim Notification System registrant will not automatically register you for this email service. To register, contact the Victim Services Division at 800-848-4284 or visit our website at www. tdcj.texas.gov and complete the victim email notification form.

You continue to have the option to receive notifications by letter, email, or both. We would like to encourage all victim service providers who utilize the Victim Notification System to elect to receive email notifications only whenever possible.

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT UPDATES AND REVIEW

by Lynn Hyde

Purpose of the VIS

During the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) revision process, the discussion among committee members focuses on a key question: what is the purpose of this form and why is it important? This is a significant question that crime victims may also have.

The VIS is designed to:

- inform crime victims of their rights provided by the Code of Criminal Procedure arts. 56.01 and 56.021;
- collect the crime victims' name and contact information for notification purposes;
- collect, directly from victims, how they have been impacted by the victimization; and
- collect the crime victims' request to be notified in the future of any parole hearings for the defendant and an explanation of the procedures by which the crime victim may obtain information concerning the release of the defendant from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

The VIS is intended to follow the offender throughout the criminal justice system, enabling criminal justice and victim services professionals to contact crime victims during the process and to inform key decision makers regarding the impact of the crime.

By choosing to complete the VIS, crime victims are providing contact information and their preference for notification services not only for the court system - district or county attorneys' offices, but also for the supervising agency (probation or the TDCJ).

The VIS also provides valuable information to key decision makers. The attorney representing the state and judge are required to consider the VIS before sentencing or before a plea bargain agreement is accepted. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles is also required to consider the VIS before an inmate is released on parole (Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.02(a)(12)).

VIS Recommended Processing Procedures

The TDCJ Victim Services Division, in consultation with the Board of Pardons and Paroles, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices and other participants in the criminal justice system, was tasked with developing recommendations to ensure that completed VIS are submitted to the TDCJ after Senate Bill (SB) 213 was passed during the 83rd Legislative Session.

Why are these recommendations important? It goes back to the key question: what is the purpose of the VIS and why is it important?

If a victim chooses to complete a VIS and that VIS is not forwarded to the supervising agency (probation or the TDCJ), the victim would not be notified of the status of the offender, including release, unless the crime victim contacted that agency directly.

For instance, if an adult defendant is sentenced to the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division (CID), the court is mandated to attach the copy of the VIS to the commitment papers (Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.03(e)). The county is then required to include a copy of the VIS in the offender's penitentiary packet when transferring the offender to the TDCJ (Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42.09(8)(a)(4)).

When the TDCJ CID receives the VIS, it is forwarded to the TDCJ Victim Services Division. If the crime victim indicated on the VIS that they wished to receive notification, the crime victim is registered on the Victim Notification System (VNS). The VNS utilizes a confidential database to provide over 80 types of notification regarding an offender's incarceration and parole/mandatory supervision,

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NEW CAMPUS SAFETY MOBILE APP NOW AVAILABLE TO VICTIMS AND SERVICES PROVIDERS

by Glenn Stockard

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is excited to announce the launch of Texas Safety University (TX Safety U), a free app available on both iOS and Android platforms.

TX Safety U provides students, faculty, staff and others at Texas colleges and universities with customized contact information to quickly connect to help and assistance when faced with sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking.

Key features include the ability to connect instantly with assistance on campus and in the community; access to crime data for 174 Texas universities; access to relevant information on sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking; and connections with state and national resources on sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking.

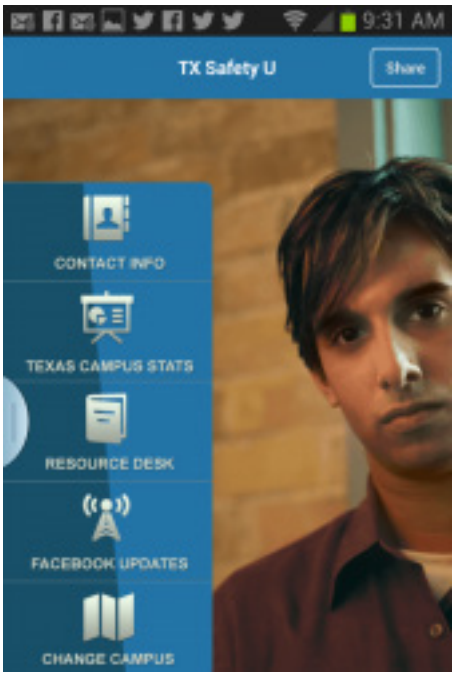
"Making support for rape victims more accessible is just common sense,' said Annette Burrhus-Clay, TAASA's Executive Director. "We know that the more a victim feels supported, the more likely they are to recover from the assault, stay in school and report the assault to law enforcement."

Support for college students can come in a variety of ways including confidential counseling through the campus mental health office, advocacy and hospital accompaniment through the community rape crisis center, class schedule changes or housing changes through the Title IX Coordinator or Dean of Students and potential university judicial action against the offender.

"No Texan should ever have to experience sexual assault from an acquaintance or a stranger, nor should they ever have to experience abuse from a dating partner. With protection and support, students are less likely to be victimized. Texas Safety University provides a centralized location for college students in our great state to find that protection and support," said Texas Representative Dawnna Dukes, who lead efforts to create a statewide taskforce to address campus sexual assault this last legislative session.

Prior to this app, if a student needed assistance after an assault they were often left to navigate through complex college and university web sites for information that was not readily available. TX Safety U puts this information in the hands of the student in an easy to access format and on their smartphone. This could make a tremendous difference in allowing immediate access to resources by a survivor.

The app was developed and customized for TAASA by Campus Sentinel, Inc., a company specializing in mobile applications for higher education safety and security. TAASA is the first not-for-profit organization to implement the private label version of Campus Sentinel.



Sample Safety U mobile app screenshot featuring various menu options for updates, resources, and campuses.

"The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault has truly made a statement about the importance of campus safety in today's society," said Campus Sentinel Co-Founder Dr. Gary J. Margolis. "Connecting campus community members to assistance when a violent act has occurred is one of the primary purposes of the app. We're thrilled that TAASA provided this resource to campuses all across Texas."

The TX Safety U app is now available to download at no cost for Android and Apple devices at Google Play and iTunes Stores and may be accessed at www.taasa.org/txsafetyu/.

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is the statewide organization committed to ending sexual violence in Texas. For more information please visit their website at www.taasa.org.

PASSING THE TORCH (cont.)

casualty events also occurred and ushered me into victim services directly. The Los Angeles Riots, marshal law, and the subsequent rebuilding introduced me to working directly with identified victims of crime, albeit in a clinical situation. Relationships I made with people in emergency response, law enforcement and criminal justice continue today or led to introductions with others in related fields of the larger victim services world.

Making connections with others in agencies involved in providing services on behalf of crime victims is and continues to be crucial.

Returning to Texas was a joy and marked another chapter in my victim services journey. I continued to work in disaster response for a time, but when I moved to the Office of the Attorney General I began to focus more on education, grants and policy. During my tenure there, I worked on developing and implementing the Texas Victim Assistance Academy – a baseline weeklong training experience for those working in the field of victim services. The hallmark of the Texas academy was the integration of field practice with applied research so that those working in the field would have real-life experience training supported by the literature. There was a faculty of seasoned professionals (including Angie McCown, Janice Harris-Lord, Derrelynn Perryman and others) who provided experiential

Jennie Barr

learning. There were also many opportunities for networking and cross-education by those in community-based nonprofit agencies (such as domestic violence and sexual assault programs) and those in system-based programs (law enforcement and criminal justice).

What became evident through feedback from Academy students in nonprofits, law enforcement and criminal justice was the invaluable nature of the following:

- Relationships developed at the Academy lasted entire careers and provided contacts and friends to call on in any part of Texas to get information, referrals, assistance with a case, or any other victim assistance.

- The cross-education between community-based and system-based providers enabled the building of bridges and trusted network and increased understanding of the strengths and limitations of each others' roles in victim assistance.

- The baseline education and resource manual provided sufficient information and skills to providers so they could handle most situations that might be encountered or at a minimum know who to call for assistance.

I also learned that each of you, every advocate and provider, brings expertise, compassion and information to the table. We learn from one another when we are willing to share our knowledge with anyone who asks. That is something to continue throughout your career: *listen to those who work in other areas and to those who come into this profession by personal experience, listen to their stories and how they handled crises and challenges so you can learn what was helpful (and not) from those who have 'been there.' This will enhance your ability to meet a victim where they are rather than where you want them to be, and, most importantly, it will teach you about their strength and resiliency.* Consider it an honor to walk that journey with a victim.

Throughout my tenure at the Office of the Attorney General, I had the opportunity to utilize my counseling and education skills in providing training and mental health support to those on the 'front lines' of victim services. Those in Crime Victims' Compensation have a challenging job that blends the skills of a victim service provider with the savvy of a business process provider. Being on the phone for hours a day with

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victims, their families or those working on their behalf can mean being the only person who listens and therefore bears the brunt of their frustrations.

Similarly, those in the Criminal Investigations Division, particularly the Internet Crimes Against Children Unit, face challenges in going after perpetrators. Often this requires investigators, analysts, forensic examiners and others to view images or videos of unthinkable crimes against children and infants, to track predators online in an effort to stop them from further abusing children by possessing, creating or distributing images, or to surreptitiously chat online with predators in order to identify and catch them. Those in the Post-Conviction Litigation Division likewise must repeatedly view difficult and horrific crime details in pursuing convictions. Each of these victim service providers works in areas outside the traditional definition of 'victim services.' Even if in non-traditional ways, I assure you these professionals are part of victim assistance and do amazing work on behalf of victims.

I want to encourage you to think beyond your borders and consider those who work in areas that may not fall under what you typically consider 'victim services.' Learn what these people do and find people in those agencies with whom you might collaborate. The more you know—measured both in information and in people—the more likely you are to be able to assist or connect a victim with those who can be of best assistance when it is needed.

Your presence is often their peace.

In the remainder of my time at the Office of the Attorney General I worked on special projects and with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services Program. There I expanded my knowledge base (always keep learning!) and worked with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE), Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART), and Primary Prevention of Sexual Assault programs. I was able to work on legislative reports (human trafficking, sexually oriented businesses), task forces (Sexual Assault Advisory Council) and program expansion.

Remember that the position you hold now leads to consideration for related projects – if you can do it, say "Yes!" These opportunities allowed me to meet seasoned professionals at the statewide and national level and to experience additional trainings, consulting, teaching and presentations. All this in turn enhanced what I could provide to victims, their families and those who support victims.

The beauty of this journey is that it takes turns and twists that expose us to a breadth of experience and amazing victims, survivors and mentors that enrich our lives and expertise in ways we may never know. The crux of what I want to share with those of you starting this journey is to be open and embrace opportunities that present themselves. Relationships are key. Victims and their needs are broader than the singular agencies or fields in which we work. Our focus and grounding is the welfare of and assistance to the victim provided by our services and presence.

In summary, here are some of the 'nuggets of gold' I have learned and would like to pass on. Many are from other "Old Buffaloes" who shared their expertise, invited me in and provided opportunities to continue serving victims in many different ways and venues:

- Ongoing Education: Seek training and any professional development through victim services conferences or trainings you are able to attend (and afford). If there is a state victim assistance academy, apply and attend. Join a statewide victim services organization or specialized victim services group. Get involved and stay involved. Seek specialized training (e.g., 'trauma-informed care' and evidence-based and applied research, which bridges direct services with available research, culturally and spiritually sensitive victim services, as in Janice Harris Lord's *Spiritually Sensitive*

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VIS UPDATES AND REVIEW *(cont.)*

including the parole review process. The VNS is a completely separate system than the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) services that are available in most Texas counties. When registered on the VNS, the crime victim is informed of their rights and services available in the post-conviction process, including the parole review process. In addition, the VIS is processed for inclusion in the offender's parole review file for the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to consider when reviewing the offender for release to parole/mandatory supervision.

So what happens if the VIS is not received by the TDCJ?

Unless the victim contacts the TDCJ Victim Services Division directly, the victim would not be registered on the VNS, and therefore would not be notified of the offender's status – including release. The VIS would not be available for the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to consider when reviewing the offender for release to parole/mandatory supervision. The victim may not be informed of their rights or be able to participate in the post-conviction phase of the criminal justice system. This not only can cause re-victimization, but can create significant safety concerns, if the victim is not informed of the offender's release.

These VIS Recommended Processing Procedures include legislative mandates and recommendations/tips that can be implemented in whole or in part in your jurisdiction. They were developed by many of your colleagues who process the VISs and work directly with crime victims on a daily basis. The purpose of the recommendations is to ensure the VIS follows the offender throughout the criminal justice process, thus enabling crime victims' ability to be informed, participate and have a voice in the system.

This VIS and VIS Recommended Processing Procedures are available on the TDCJ Victim Services website:
tdcj.texas.gov/publications/pubs_victim_impact_statement.html

VIS Indicator Judgement Form

The Office of Court Administration is in the process of updating the standardized felony Judgement Form to incorporate changes from the 83rd Legislative Session. These changes include a requirement that the judgment indicate if a VIS was returned to the attorney representing the state (Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42.01(ii)). The new indicator will serve as a check and balance for the agencies involved in processing the VIS. We will provide more information about the new Judgment Form once it has been finalized and published.

Training Offered

The TDCJ Victim Services Division is excited to offer specialized training on VIS. This training entitled, "Victim Impact Statement – The Victim's Voice in the Criminal Justice Process," has been developed for those individuals and agencies who bear a legal responsibility regarding the handling of Victim Impact Statements. The target audience is all judges, prosecutors, victim assistance coordinators, district clerks, court coordinators, probation officers, and law enforcement personnel who assist victims, handle the victim impact statement or assemble penitentiary packets. Community-based organizations and others who assist victims are also encouraged to attend.

"Victim Impact Statement –The Victim's Voice in the Criminal Justice Process" will focus on the importance of the VIS at key stages of the criminal justice process. The training will discuss the legal responsibilities of the various agencies regarding the VIS and will offer ideas for closing gaps that may exist between agencies in the criminal justice system.

If you are interested in attending or hosting this training please contact Lynn Hyde at 512-406-5916 or write to lynn.hyde@tdcj.texas.gov.

An Overview of the Board

from the Board of Pardons and Paroles

In 1936 the Texas Constitution was amended to create a constitutional three-member Board of Pardons and Paroles. While the composition has been modified several times since then, currently the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) is comprised of the Presiding Officer (Chair), six members appointed by the governor and twelve parole commissioners hired by the chair.

The voting members act in panels of three persons in matters of release, revocation and determining conditions of supervision. A majority vote determines the outcome. An exception to the three-member panel are extraordinary cases requiring a vote by board members only and those cases require a two-thirds majority vote.

The Board has offices in Amarillo, Angleton, Gatesville, Huntsville, Palestine, and San Antonio. The seven-member board makes recommendations to the governor on executive clemency matters, including pardons, reprieves, and commutation actions. The Board employs professional staff to assist with legal matters, the parole process, hearings, clemency and administrative duties.

In deciding the direction of the current Board of Pardons and Paroles, the chair has led the agency's collaboration with the correctional institution, parole, rehabilitation, victim services and reentry divisions of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. With the on-going divisional collaborations, the Board is ideally positioned to enhance the likelihood of success for the offenders. Communities are safer and victimization is reduced when offenders succeed.

Working close with the various divisions of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice when risk and need instruments are adopted, rehabilitation programs are developed and implemented, supervision programs are added, allows for more informed voters.

The relationship the Board has with Victim Services is a crucial one. Board member David Gutierrez is the Liaison with the Victim Services Division. As the victim is a major part of the parole process, his role is key in maintaining an open and continuous dialogue with the division on victim issues and concerns.

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles seeks to make just decisions in parole cases to restore human potential and to impose prudent conditions of release for a structured reintegration of an offender into the community, always conscious of public safety.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles decides which eligible offenders to release on parole or discretionary mandatory supervision, and under what conditions. The Board uses research-based Parole Guidelines to assess each offender's likelihood for a successful parole against the risk to society. Stay tuned for the next addition of the Victim Informer, when we will go into more detail concerning the role parole guidelines play in parole decision making.

The TDCJ Victim Services Division Introduces Two Additional Notifications

The TDCJ Victim Services Division (VSD) is now providing two additional notifications on the parole warrant process for all registrants on our confidential Victim Notification System. These two notifications inform registrants if an arrest warrant is withdrawn or if an arrest is made on an offender who is on parole supervision. Statutory victims may elect to receive these notifications via text message and may contact the TDCJ VSD to register.

PASSING THE TORCH (cont.)

Caregiving). Keep current on ethics in victim services (see: Ethics in Victim Services by Melissa Hook). Seek and learn from mentors, and always ask for information, resources and support: be it from a boss, a colleague, a friend; anyone who challenges you. For me this has been invaluable.

- Importance of Collaboration: Collaboration builds bridges, and bridges build trust. Agency-based and community-based offices need to create an 'us and them' rather than 'us vs. them' mentality. Initiate contact with other victim service providers in your community: pick up the phone, ask someone to lunch. If you are in a nonprofit agency, meet with local detectives, investigators and victim service personnel at the police department or prosecutor's office, and vice versa. Meet 'allied' victim service support staff, those working in online crimes or at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), human trafficking, SANE nurses, etc. The more people you know in the field, the more likely it is that victims will receive the services they need.

- Put Yourself Out There: Apply to present at conferences, write articles, co-author, co-sponsor, co-anything (joint projects), and become familiar with leaders in the field.

- Network: Meet, connect and stay connected; learn from those ahead of you on the path and those on the national stage – the "Old Buffaloes" – you, too, may become one down the road.

- Move forward, only glance back: Within your agencies, remember that struggles and challenges, changes in administration, lack of resources, and personality conflicts (all the things that make victim services challenging) are normal and inevitable. As one wise songwriter, Butch Hancock, said: "they're WAVES, not the water." Prioritize your challenges and reserve your energy and emotion for what is most important: what is in the best interest of the victim.

- Remember to empower rather than enable victims.

- Self-care: This is the most critical element for longevity. Without you, there is no victim assistance, so take care of you. Have fun in equivalent proportion to your work, and leave work at work unless on call. Use colleagues for support, consultation, and as a sounding board. And always remember: maintain your boundaries.

For me, this has been a rewarding, challenging, encouraging and awe-inspiring journey. The victims I have had the pleasure of working with taught me the meaning of courage, strength and resilience. My colleagues taught me about the field of victim services and even more about the shared commitment to easing the victims' journey, collegiality and even treasured friendships. This is a profession that is not for everyone; it is a calling and a passion. I have learned that everything is connected and that relationships are the key. Everything comes full circle. And now the next chapter brings me back to my clinical therapy roots, allowing me to work with victims and their families again in direct services. I am grateful for that, and grateful to each of you that carry on the torch.

BELL COUNTY HONORS VICTIMS WITH WALL OF COURAGE

by Jill McAfee

Change is good, so they say, but in our office change has been great. I have been with the Bell County District Attorney's office more than 28 years. When I started, the field of victim assistance was very new in Texas. There were only about four or five district attorney's offices that even had a victim advocate. We were one of those offices, and we were happy back then to even be acknowledged with a job description. Now we are an important part of the trial team.

One important change for our office came about 10 months ago when we filled a position for a Victim Assistance Coordinator with a determined advocate who decided our victim services section needed a face lift. Dana Bettger, the new kid on the block, was right! We have a beautiful office and lovely waiting areas for victims, but our break room and kitchen area was too sterile and bland. She decided, with our District Attorney Henry Garza's blessing, to cozy it up with curtains, table runners, plants etc. That looked great, but she wanted one more thing: art work! Everyone in the office had different opinions on what would be best, but as Henry and I drove to Galveston for a conference, he asked, "How about pictures of our victims with something that shows the families that have touched our lives?" And so it was! It became known as our Wall of Courage.

The Wall of Courage reminds us how many lives are touched by crime every day and how courageous victims and their families are. The photos are a constant reminder that crime does not just affect the victim, but all the people around them. It is a testament to the courage, strength and determination of those left behind to follow through and work with the justice system even when it seems hopeless. The pictures on the wall are of our victims of felony crimes. Some pictures are of homicide victims, while others are survivors who have worked closely with us during the years to prosecute their cases. All of them have had a great impact on our lives and each has a story of their own that will forever remain in our hearts. These are real people, real families, and real life stories. We received permission from each family to use their favorite photo of themselves or their loved one. Because of the overwhelming response by victims, we now plan to rotate the photos every 6-8 months to include everyone.

While organizing the wall project, I asked each victim or survivor to give me one word describing how they felt about their experience with us during trial. This is where the words between the pictures come from. One survivor now owns a graphic design company, and they asked if they could help make this a reality. They made vinyl decals of each word and only charged for materials. Having found the picture frames online at discount prices, the total cost for our Wall of Courage was under $250.00.

Everyone that sees the Wall of Courage expresses deep emotion, pride and remembrance. The Wall brings a strong sense of reverence to the room that many victims and families will use to gather and give each other strength and encouragement during court proceedings.

In one sense, our Wall of Courage design was the result of three people putting their heads together to pay tribute to the reason we are all here: victims; but, honestly, it is the result of how important victims of crime become in our hearts and lives.

Bell County District Attorney's office staff honor victims with a Wall of Courage. Does your office do something special to strengthen resolve and recognize victims? Submit articles and pictures to the Clearinghouse.

2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week Calendar

Sunday April 6 - Saturday April 12, 2014

30 Years

Restoring the Balance of Justice

Crime Victims' Rights Week - Texas Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT AND VENUE	CONTACT
April 3-4	2nd Annual Crime Victim's Conference of East Texas Henderson County District Attorney's Office, Athens	Deanna Browning, Victim Coordinator *dbrowning@co.henderson.tx.us*
April 5	Andrews Children's Advocacy Center 5K - 8:00 AM North Crest Baptist Church, Andrews	Serena Hooper, Victim Coordinator *shooper@co.andrews.tx.us*
April 7-11	Parker County Attorney School Art Contest Parker County Courthouse Annex, Weatherford	Lisa Mehrhoff, Victim Coordinator *lisa.mehrhoff@parkercountytx.com*
April 8	Crime Victims' Rights Week Proclamation - 12:00 PM Henderson County District Attorney's Office, Athens	Deanna Browning, Victim Coordinator *dbrowning@co.henderson.tx.us*
April 8-9	Every Victim, Every Time Conference Brazos County Expo Center, Bryan	www.evetbv.org *cvca@evetbv.org*
April 9	Crime Victims' Rights Week Ceremony - 11:00 AM Dickinson City Hall, Dickinson	Nelda Harles, Dickson Police Dept. *nharles@ci.dickinson.tx.us*
	Victims' and Service Providers' Breakfast - 8:30 AM Carmona's Tex-Mex Restaurant, Terrell	Shirley Bruner, Victim Coordinator *shirleybruner@kaufmancounty.net*
April 10	Victims' Tribute and Wreath Laying Ceremony - 10:00 AM San Antonio Police Training Academy, San Antonio	Cynthia Jahn, Victim Coordinator *cjahn@bexar.org*
	Crime Victims' Rights Week Ceremony - 7:00 PM Central Christian Church, Austin	Crime Victims' Rights Week Coalition *danders@tlsc.org*
	17th Annual Light of Hope - 6:00 PM Calvary United Methodist Church, Paris	Jane Adams, Victim Coordinator *jadams@co.lamar.tx.us*
April 11	2014 National Crime Victim's Expo - 4:30 PM Cameron County District Attorney's Office, Brownsville	Beatrice Salazar, Victim Coordinator *beatrice.salazar@co.cameron.tx.us*
April 19	5th Annual Victims' Superhero Dash - 7:15 AM Alabama Coushatta Reservation, Livingston	Sherry Sprayberry, Victim Coordinator *sherry@polkcountyda.com*

BE SURE TO SUBMIT EVENTS YOUR OFFICE MAY BE HOSTING TO THE TVAT CALENDAR!

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

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CALENDAR

Check out the Calendar page for Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online. Criminal justice and victim services professionals can view, search, and submit victim-related trainings and events on the TVAT Calendar webpage. www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/vscalendar/index.php.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU !

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:

You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD Internet website. If you wish, we will notify you via e-mail each time *The Victim's Informer* becomes available on the TDCJ VSD Internet website and provide an electronic link to *The Victim's Informer*. Send your e-mail address to:
tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov

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

April Awareness

In addition to the National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Below are additional resources to help you and your colleagues work toward supporting victims and establishing communities that can be free of child abuse and sexual assault.

Child Abuse Prevention Month

"Even one abused child is too many."
- Governor Rick Perry

The Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) of Texas reports that:

- Today, 185 Texas children will be victims of abuse.
- In one year, more than 65,000 cases of child abuse were confirmed in Texas.
- 1 in 4 girls is sexually abused before her 18th birthday.
- 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before his 18th birthday.

For more information about child abuse resources and reporting, please visit the following websites:

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas
www.cactx.org

Texas CASA
www.texascasa.org

Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards
www.tccwb.org

Mandatory reporting information:
www.dshs.state.tx.us/childabusereporting/

Blue "No excuse for child abuse" flags on display from the CAC of Collin County.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

IT'S TIME ... TO TALK ABOUT IT!
Your voice. Our future. Prevent sexual violence.

"We rededicate ourselves to breaking the cycle of violence that threatens lives, erodes communities and weakens our country. As we reflect on the progress we have made and the distance we have yet to go, let us recommit to empowering survivors and fighting for a safer future for every American."
- President Barack Obama

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) reports that:

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives
- Young people experience heightened rates of sexual violence, and youth ages 12-17 were 2.5 times as likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault

And so we must all work together to educate our youth and our community about sexual violence prevention, supporting victims and survivors and speaking out against harmful attitudes and actions.