

# THE VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

JUNE/JULY 2018 VOL. 23, NO. 2

## National Crime Victims' Rights Week Service Awards

*By: Angie McCown, Director  
TDCJ Victim Services Division*

Each April, National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is commemorated across the United States. In Washington, D.C., the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) hosts the National Crime Victims' Rights Service Awards. This year's keynote speaker was the United States Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, who said, "I remember when President Reagan established the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week back in 1981. He had just appointed me as United States Attorney. In his presidential proclamation, he observed that 'for too long, the victims of crime have been the forgotten persons of our criminal justice system ... Yet the protection of our citizens – to guard them from becoming victims – is the primary purpose of our penal laws.' He also commented about those organizations and individuals that were receiving awards, "Our goal is not to fill up the prisons. Our goal is to reduce crime in America, to serve and protect law-abiding Americans and their families, to make America safer. Today's award recipients have done just that. They have

served, - and they have served with distinction. I've heard the stories, and they make me proud. These are people who provide support to victims immediately at the crime scene. These are people who ensure that victims are secure in their legal rights."

One of the organizations the Attorney General was referring to is the Travis County Sheriff's Office's Victim Services Unit (VSU) Volunteers, who received the OVC's Volunteer for Victims Award! This unit is on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with nine paid staff and 50 trained volunteers. Since 2013 they have increased the number of victims they serve by 29 percent and on-call requests have increased by



*Angie McCown*

34 percent. The efforts of these volunteers have allowed VSU to keep up with the growing demand for service, and to function with less fatigue and less overtime expenditures. What's most important, the work of these volunteers has allowed the VSU to continue their mission to enhance the response of law enforcement by providing crisis intervention, advocacy and access to resources that reduce the impact of trauma on individuals and the community. Please join me in congratulating them on this well-deserved recognition!

For more detail regarding OVC's National Crime Victims' Rights Service Awards go to: <https://ovcnvrv.ncjrs.gov/Awards/AwardGallery/gallerysearch.html>.



**The mission of Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the Criminal Justice System.**

**To contact the Victim Services Division, call 800-848-4284 or email [victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov).**

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# VICTIM'S INFORMER

Young Hearts Matter: Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

By: Wendy Williamson, Program Specialist II, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

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*Samantha Martinez & the Juarez Lincoln High School Law Enforcement Club collaborated with the Hidalgo County Family Violence Task Force to host the Young Hearts Matter 2K walk & pep rally. To view the YouTube video, visit <http://www.lajoyaisd.com/2016/02/young-hearts-matter-2k-walk-set-for-saturday/>.*

Every year, approximately 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner. It is also known that three in four parents have never talked to their children about domestic violence<sup>1</sup>.

I had the pleasure of speaking with a mother/daughter advocate team, Rosie Martinez (mother) and Samantha Martinez (daughter), who are well-known within their

community for taking a stand against teen dating violence.

*What made you want to start the club at school?*

**Samantha:** I wanted to do my part to raise awareness about teen dating violence prevention on campus, but I was told by the principal that I could not take instruction time away from the students. I met with my Law Enforcement Instructor and started the first Law Enforcement Club in

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from <https://nrcdv.org/dvam/tdivam>. Accessed 3/20/18.

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# Young Hearts Matter: Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

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the school's history, with the help of my mother Rosie Martinez, Ms. Santos Palomo, Director of the Academies of Juarez Lincoln High School (JLHS), and Mr. Jesse Macias, my Law Enforcement Instructor. I feel that prevention matters because every youth deserves to live a life free of violence. I would like to see this movement spread all over Texas so that youth are provided the resources they need to face the challenges they are being exposed to. During our teen dating violence presentations we speak about violence in general, such as: dating abuse, sexual violence, bullying, the use of technology to abuse, sex trafficking of minors, online solicitation of minors, stalking, and family violence. We explain to youth that violence is never the answer to resolve conflict. During this epidemic of violence in schools, it is imperative that schools provide violence prevention education and awareness on campus and help students that are being victimized to prevail and overcome abuse.

*What are the results of your efforts?*

**Samantha:** In 2014 at the age of 16, I started the "Start Talking Institute" of Love is Respect which was a national campaign. We were a group of teenagers that



met to discuss and implement a 10-week program addressing teen dating violence and to provide awareness on this subject matter. That same year, I presented with my mother, Rosie Martinez, and Dr. Jeff Temple in the 28th Annual Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) statewide conference on Teen Dating Violence Prevention. I started the Young Hearts Matter (YHM) campaign in 2015 to provide resource information to high school students on teen dating violence and to teach them about healthy relationships. The Law Enforcement Club students conducted a survey in the cafeteria about how many students had been victims of dating abuse. That prompted us to start the 1st YHM 2K Walk in the La Joya Pack Stadium in 2016. I organized presentations, hung posters and gave out flyers on campus. In 2017, I was appointed to serve on the TCFV Youth Board, and I have been able to do statewide prevention work on dating violence. Although I graduated high school in 2016, the YHM campaign and the Law Enforcement Club are still going strong. February 2018 was a very successful YHM teen dating violence prevention month. We held Orange Day, where many presentations were held at schools within La Joya ISD, Weslaco

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# Young Hearts Matter: Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

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ISD, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, and Mission ISD. We held the 3rd Annual YHM 2K Walk, a Teen Self-Defense class with Weslaco Police Department, a youth conference with the Christian Life Church, and a press conference outside the Hidalgo County Courthouse with the Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney's Office (HCDA). We also participated in a radio interview that was broadcasted live locally and nationally on iHeart Radio, passed a proclamation at the Hidalgo County Commissioners court, and did the "What Were You Wearing" art exhibit at South Texas College. The first YHM Cheer was created by the JLHS Cheer squad and we conducted a professional training for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services case workers in collaboration with the HCDA and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Social Work Department. We



*Samantha Martinez, Teen Dating Violence Advocate*

were able to reach over 4,000 students at middle schools, high schools, universities and colleges.

*Has anyone reacted in a negative way?*

**Samantha:** No one has reacted negatively; this has all been a very positive experience for everyone that has joined this movement. It has been a long journey since 2014, but it has been very rewarding to see the huge impact that we have created in our community. My mother started this campaign with me to teach me about healthy relationships, and I joined her efforts and then expanded to reach more teens. She has been a Victim Advocate for 18 years. I have been by her side in every press conference, rally, walk, presentation, conference, and all the prevention events that she participates in. I am also proud to say that my little brother, Miguel Angel Martinez, Jr. is now carrying the mission on campus. He spearheaded the 2018 YHM Campaign at the STEM Academies of Juarez Lincoln. He is now organizing the walk and the presentations on campus.

*Can you both tell me about your awards and achievements?*

**Samantha Martinez** was nominated as YHM Activist of the Year in 2016. TCFV recognizes a young person who has been a

driving force for social change among their peers and has done significant work to promote awareness and prevention of dating abuse in their community or school.

**Rosie Martinez** was awarded the YHM Advocate of the year in 2018. TCFV recognizes an adult ally who partners with young people, is a leader for violence prevention in their community, and has made prevention programming more accessible as a result of their efforts.



*Rosie Martinez, Victim Services Unit Director at the Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney's Office, teen dating violence advocate, and proud mother to Samantha and Miguel Angel Martinez*

Juarez Lincoln High School awarded **Samantha Martinez** the Presidential Award for her leadership of the JLHS Law Enforcement Club.

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# Young Hearts Matter: Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

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The Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney's Office awarded **Samantha Martinez** the YHM State Youth Ambassador of the year for her prevention efforts in Hidalgo County, and for representing the Rio Grande Valley at the state level by serving on the TCFV Youth Board.



*Samantha Martinez being interviewed at a teen dating violence awareness event*

**Rosie Martinez** was recognized as one of 5 most influential women in Texas by the TCFV. This recognition acknowledges the leadership of women who have made it their life's work to empower other women. These women create remarkable services and policies and challenge conditions that permit violence to occur.

**Rosie Martinez** was awarded a Senate Proclamation for her 18-year career in victim

services, as well as extensive volunteerism in prevention work against family violence and teen dating violence in 2017.

**Rosie Martinez** was awarded the National Honor Advocate Award for her outstanding work in crime victim advocacy by the National Organization for Victim Assistance.

*How does it make you feel that your daughter took a public stand against dating violence?*

**Rosie:** I am very proud of my daughter for being a voice for the many victims that remain silent out of fear. Having these types of conversations with our youth allows them to speak against violence, and we remind them that silence hides violence. My daughter and every youth that has joined this movement will be the future generation that will break the silence of abuse and end the cycle of violence. It is important to inspire youths to not just join this movement but to become the leaders of the social change they are trying to make. They will lead the path for others that are following in our footsteps. The movement to end violence against women must continue with new generations to come.

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Samantha:** I want to recognize the efforts of my little brother, Miguel Angel Martinez Jr., and encourage males to join the movement. Males play an important role in ending violence against women. Having males take a stand against dating abuse is very important. I also want to encourage other educators and parents to join

*“My daughter was about to be at the dating age, and I wanted her to be aware and educated so that she could have a healthy relationship and know the signs to look for.”*

*-Rosie Martinez*



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# Young Hearts Matter: Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention

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Miguel Angel Martinez, Jr., Teen dating advocate and younger brother to Samantha Martinez



Miguel Angel Martinez, Jr. being interviewed at a teen dating violence awareness event

teens and start having these conversations at school and at home. The more people that join this movement and help us reach more youth, the greater the impact will be within the community, and that will allow us to educate teens on healthy relationships. We are the future generation that will end the cycle of abuse!

*It's so important for people my age to get the right information, to hear the statistics, and to be conscious about the reality happening every day in our schools.*  
-Samantha Martinez

*Do you have any suggestions on how someone could reach out for help who has been a victim of dating violence, or knows someone who has been victimized?*

- You can text **loveis** to 22522 to receive a response from a peer advocate of Love Is Respect.
- You can speak to a peer advocate by calling 1-866-331-9474. When you call, be prepared for the advocate to ask if you're in a safe place to talk.
- If you are in immediate danger, call local law enforcement or dial 9-1-1.
- You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.
- For help in Texas, you can visit the TCFV website at <http://tcfv.org/help/>.

*Can we find you on social media?*

**Samantha:** Yes, you can find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/Young-Hearts-Matter-RGV-1158158840982083/> and [www.facebook.com/hcfvtf](http://www.facebook.com/hcfvtf).

You can also find us on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnzL4HmpZ8s>.

To find out how you can participate in raising awareness on teen dating violence, please visit Texas Council on Family Violence at <http://tcfv.org/get-involved/#awareness>.



# Ending Elder Abuse is Everyone's Business

By: Julie Jespersen; Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

By: Dirk W. Sheridan, Community Engagement Lead, Texas Adult Protective Services

Is there someone in your neighborhood who needs protection?

Elder Abuse Prevention Month is commemorated in May each year. Elder Abuse Prevention Month is a time to learn about elder abuse and what you can do to help – because it's everyone's business to help prevent abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of our neighbors who are elderly or have disabilities.

Texas Adult Protective Services (APS) was involved in a grass-roots effort, throughout the month that brings together community, civic, and professional groups to focus attention and resources on preventing and stopping elder abuse. This included workshops, presentations, caregiver support events, professional networking, and other events that increased understanding and cooperation in addressing the issue.

Last year, Texas Adult Protective Services received 7 percent more allegations of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation than the previous year, but the total number of validated cases declined by 15 percent. The decline was primarily the result of a new structured approach to casework that APS began using in 2014 that includes

new safety and risk assessments.

"We're seeing the benefits of a much more sophisticated approach that helps caseworkers more accurately determine which clients are safe and which ones are at risk of ongoing abuse or neglect," says Kez Wold, Department of Family Protective Service Associate Commissioner for APS. "So now we are able to focus more services on the clients who really need those services."

However, APS cannot deal with this issue alone. Communities must work together to protect vulnerable Texans. There were over 40,000 cases of confirmed abuse, neglect, or exploitation last year and the elder population continues to grow. There are over three million people in Texas age 65 or older and another two million who have a disability and are eligible for APS services.

Self-neglect is a major issue for the elderly as is abuse, neglect, or exploitation by adult children or other family members of the victim.

I would also like for everyone to keep in mind that the United Nations (UN) designated June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). WEAAD happens each year on June 15.

It was officially recognized by the UN General Assembly in December 2011, following a request by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, who first established the commemoration in June 2006. It represents the one day of the year when the whole world voices its opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted on some of our older generations.

You may view the UN resolution here: <http://www.un.org/en/events/elderabuse>.

WEEAD brings together senior citizens, their caregivers, and governments to combat the problem of elder abuse. The day aims to focus global attention on the problem of physical, emotional, and financial abuse of elders. It also seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by an aging population, and brings together senior citizens, and their caregivers, national and local government, academics, and the private sector to exchange ideas about how to best reduce incidents of violence toward elders, increase reporting of such abuse, and to develop elder friendly policies.

Currently, the world is undergoing significant demographic changes.

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# Ending Elder Abuse is Everyone's Business

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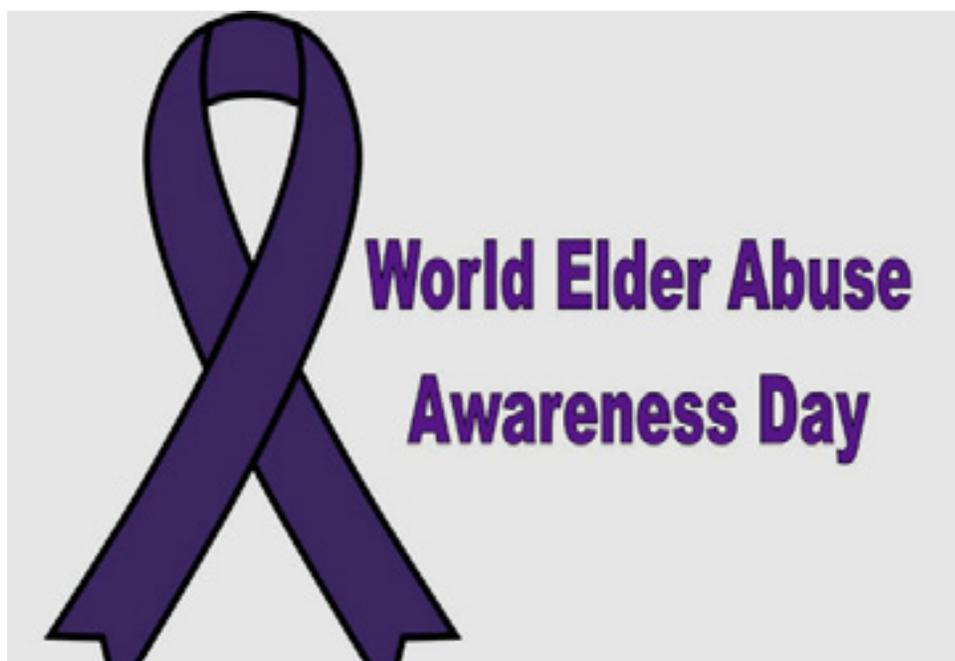
Estimates indicate that by 2050, the global population of people above the age of 60 will exceed the number of younger people. These changes have led to a worldwide recognition of the problems and challenges that the elderly face. Research has shown that elder abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation is one of the biggest issues facing senior citizens around the world. World Health Organization data suggests that 4 to 6 percent of the elder population suffer from some form of abuse, a large percentage of which goes unreported.

The purpose of WEAAD is to encourage communities to recognize the problem of elder abuse, and for countries to create policies that foster respect for elders and provide them the tools to continue to be productive citizens.

Please remember that Texas State law requires anyone who suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation to report it. You can do that by calling the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or report online at [www.TxAbuseHotline.org](http://www.TxAbuseHotline.org).



*Friday, June 15, 2018*



# The Texas Board of Criminal Justice

## When All the News is Bad News

By: Derrelynn Perryman, Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Violence. People hurting people. Senseless tragedy and suffering. Sometimes it can seem that one bad thing happens after another. And that's true. But it's also true that every day there are people who work tirelessly to make the world a better place. One good thing happens after another, too.

I have worked in victim services for many years. Sometimes when I meet new people they make comments like "wow that must be really hard" or even "that must be depressing." I just smile and tell them that I love what I do and that I get to work with really amazing people. And that's the truth - I get to work with people who help. One of my favorite quotes is from Fred Rogers: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

There are thousands of people all across Texas who dedicate their time and effort to supporting and serving victims of violent crime. You find them in system-based and community-based victim services, you find them in advocacy groups, you find them in policing, you find them in prosecution and corrections, and in dozens of fields like firefighting, medicine, and mental health. Some are paid and some are volunteers.

Some of them come to this work because they know first-hand about the challenges survivors face. Some of them because they just have a heart for helping. But what they all have in common is they understand the importance of caring for others and they hold on to the certainty that they can and do make a difference.

When I look around, I see the helpers. I see survivors. I see amazing grace and dignity and resilience in people even in their worst moments. And instead of

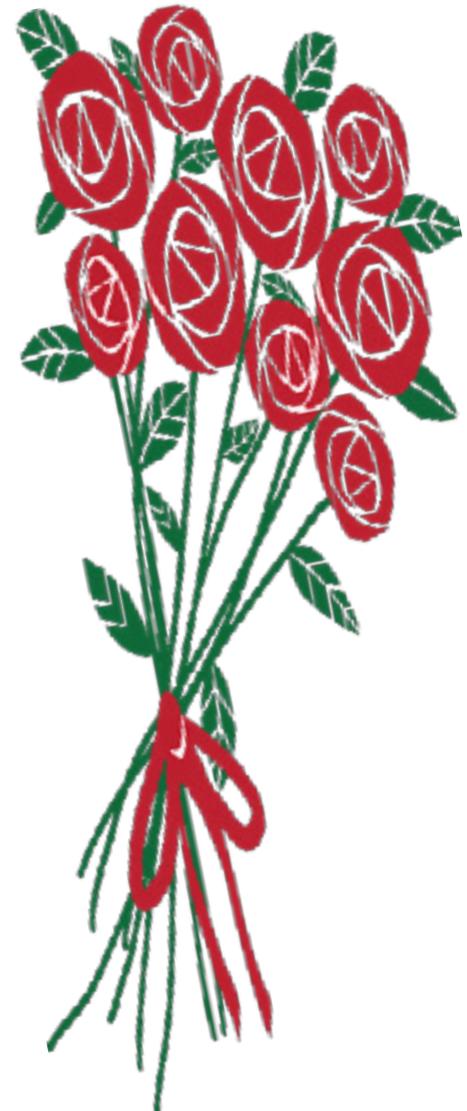


leading to despair, it strengthens my hope and belief that good is always going to overcome evil. Thank you for what you do, for your service and compassion and for the way you go about helping.

---Derrelynn Perryman ★



Derrelynn Perryman



# Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles

## Clemency in Texas

By: Libby Hamilton, Victim Liaison, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

As you may know, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board) has the authority to make parole, including discretionary mandatory supervision, release and revocation decisions. However, what you may not know is that the Board, which consists of seven Board Members, also makes recommendations concerning clemency matters.

The Texas Constitution authorizes the Governor to grant clemency, after a conviction or successful completion of a deferred adjudication, upon written recommendation of a majority of the Board. The Constitution identifies several types of clemency, e.g., pardon, commutation of punishment, reprieve, and remission of fines and forfeitures.

Clemency is also available to those offenders who are convicted of a capital felony and sentenced to death. Clemency in capital cases includes 1) a reprieve from execution and 2) a commutation of sentence to a lesser penalty. The Board has a Clemency Section whose staff is responsible for processing clemency applications, ensuring applicants provide all required documentation, notifying the trial officials, and notifying the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division (VSD).

Once VSD receives the notification from the Board, the VSD staff will check the confidential database to see if there are any victims registered to receive notifications on that particular offender. If so, the VSD contacts those victims to offer them the opportunity to provide input. Trial officials including the sheriff, chief of police, prosecuting attorney, and judge in the county and court of conviction and release, are also given the opportunity to provide input regarding possible clemency for the offender. It should be noted that all information received and maintained by the Clemency Section is confidential. None of the letters or documents received from a victim will be released to the public.

Once all the documents are gathered, the Clemency Section staff submits all the information received to the Board Members who will vote whether to recommend or not recommend the Governor grant clemency. This vote occurs two business days prior to the execution date. The Clemency Administrator will again notify the VSD and trial officials who submitted input, in addition to notifying the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the Board's final vote. The Governor will make the final decision on the request for clemency.

For further details, you can obtain a copy of the clemency brochure by accessing the Board's website at [www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp) or email the Clemency Section at [bpp-clemency@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:bpp-clemency@tdcj.texas.gov) or call (512) 406-5852. All the BPP's rules, policies and directives pertaining to the clemency process can also be found on the Board's website. ★

### WHAT IS CLEMENCY?

The governor has the authority to grant clemency upon the written recommendation of a majority of the Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board). Clemency includes full pardons after conviction or successful completion of a term of deferred adjudication community supervision, conditional pardons, pardons based on innocence, commutations of sentence, and reprieves. In capital cases, clemency includes a commutation of sentence to life in prison and a reprieve for execution. The governor may also grant a one-time reprieve of execution, not to exceed (30) days, without a Board recommendation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from [http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/exec\\_clem/exec\\_clem.html](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/exec_clem/exec_clem.html). Accessed 4/3/18.

# Texas Victim Resource Directory

By: Carol Ellis, Program Specialist II, TDCJ Victim Services Division

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) is pleased to announce the launch of its new, online Texas Victim Resource Directory (Directory). The new Directory is an integral part of TDCJ's commitment to provide victims, advocates, and criminal justice professionals with tools and victim services resources.

The new platform allows users to not only search by location, but also by a number of other factors including the type of crime victims served by an organization and the services they provide. The new Directory also includes these enhanced capabilities:

**\*A built-in search** builder that allows users to search on multiple criteria for specific results or to search broadly for resources in a particular geographic area.

**\*Mobile functionality** for those individuals accessing the Directory from their phones or

other hand-held devices.

**\*Relevant search results** that are kept up to date.

**\*Portal for resource directory agencies** to update information listed in the Directory, request to be added to the Directory and annual reminders to verify contact information.

To see the Directory in action, go to [www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource\\_directory/](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource_directory/).

We are in the process of contacting all agencies listed in the Directory to provide portal login instructions and to request confirmation of the published directory information. We have worked diligently to provide the most up-to-date information possible in our new directory of more than 700 governmental and non-profit, community-based organizations operating throughout Texas. However, if your agency or one of your

offices does not appear in the Directory or you have updated information for our Directory, you can make those changes through the portal by clicking:

- The registration page: [www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource\\_directory/register.php](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource_directory/register.php)
- The update/delete page: [www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource\\_directory/locate.php](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/prod/resource_directory/locate.php)

Requests for additions to the Directory will be screened by TDCJ VSD staff.

We are excited to provide this new functionality for the Directory, and we welcome feedback. Your requests for help with the portal or other questions or comments about the Directory may be directed to: TDCJ VSD Program Specialist Carol Ellis at [carol.ellis@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:carol.ellis@tdcj.texas.gov) or (512) 406-5916. ★

## Texas Victim Resource Directory

Find local resources in Texas serving victims of crime.

SEARCH TIP: To select multiple terms within a search field, hold down Ctrl key while selecting terms. If you receive too few search results, try removing search terms. If you receive too many results, try adding terms to refine results.

### Find Resources:

<b>Crime Type Served:</b> All Crimes Adults Molested as Children Arson Assault
<b>Services Provided:</b> All Services 24-Hour Crisis Line Assistance with Crime Victims' Compensation Assistance with Victim Impact Statements
<b>Organization Type:</b> Corrections Law Enforcement (Federal) Law Enforcement (State) Law Enforcement (Local)
<input type="radio"/> City <input type="radio"/> County
<b>Organization Name:</b> <input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Search &gt;&gt;"/> <input type="button" value="Clear"/>

### For Organizations:

Register your organization with our directory! <input type="button" value="Register &gt;&gt;"/>
View, update, or remove your existing registration: <input type="button" value="Review or Remove &gt;&gt;"/>

# Victim Impact Panels

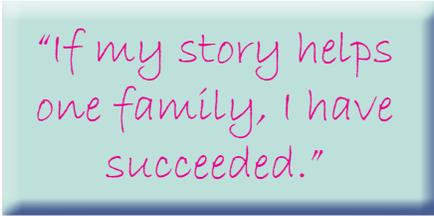
By: Rose Trevino, Regional Victim Services Coordinator, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

A Victim Impact Panel (VIP) is a non-confrontational presentation, in which a crime victim tells an audience about their victimization and the impact and consequences of that victimization.

VIPs were originally established in 1980, by a well-known advocacy group, whose primary goal was to inform others about the devastating effects of drinking and driving. While this group continues to employ VIPs in their programs, VIPs are now utilized by various organizations, include victims of numerous types of violent crimes, and are presented to a wide array of audiences. The TDCJ VSD assists crime victims by providing support and assistance to those who have volunteered as panelists.

VIPs are beneficial for victim panelists and their audiences. In addition to providing an outlet for crime victims to share the story of their unique victimization, VIPs also provide their audiences with the opportunity to learn and understand the devastating and long-lasting effects of violent crime. For criminal justice professionals, and other professionals whose duties involve contact with crime victims, VIPs help them to develop a sensitivity toward the victims whom they may encounter in the course of their duties. It also helps them to better understand what needs are important to victims.

One might ask why anyone would want to speak to others about a painful situation such as violent victimization.

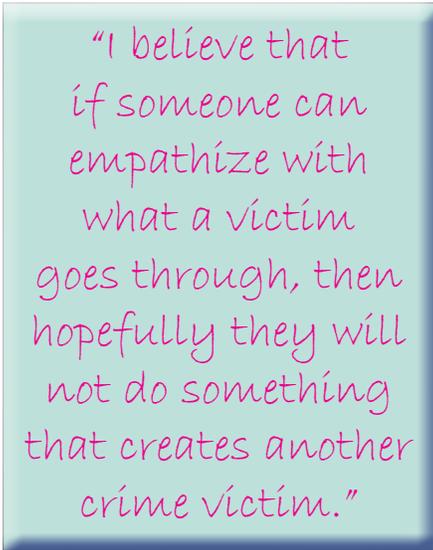


"If my story helps one family, I have succeeded."

Lana Norris, a long-time volunteer panelist for the TDCJ VSD, found herself speaking publicly immediately after the brutal murder of her son in 1993, when the crime garnered tremendous media attention. A year later, she found herself speaking to her first audience, a mixture of prison staff and convicted felons, at an event sponsored by the TDCJ. Norris shares that after being presented with the opportunity to speak, "I wanted to make a difference for people and bring good from the murder of my son. I believe this has done all of that while helping me heal." She describes her experience as a volunteer panelist as, "making a difference, making people's lives better, rewarding, healing and a blessing for herself and others."

Similarly, Shirley Esparza, a domestic violence survivor, who also volunteers as a panelist for the TDCJ VSD indicates that she began speaking publicly about her victimization in 1996 when she was asked for an interview from a local television station. She

recounts her experience stating, "I remember feeling empowered by finally breaking the silence! I had lived in an abusive marriage for 15 years." Esparza further states that she and her five children, who witnessed the abuse, kept the abuse a secret from friends, extended family, coworkers and their church. She shares that her reason for volunteering as a panelist was "to make even a small difference."



"I believe that if someone can empathize with what a victim goes through, then hopefully they will not do something that creates another crime victim."

In addition to learning about the long-term effects of victimization and developing empathy for their victims, offenders who attend VIPs are provided with an opportunity to think about future decisions and their consequences. Norris states, "I believe that if someone can empathize with what a victim goes through, then hopefully they will not do something that creates another crime victim." Esparza also states, "If my story helps one family, I have

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# Victim Impact Panels

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succeeded.” She explains that a chief motivator in her speaking is to save “a new generation of children from never having to endure the lifelong effects of growing up in domestic violence.”

In Texas, some offenders who have been released on parole are required to attend a VIP and complete surveys after their attendance. The effectiveness of the panel is often revealed in their surveys. For example, it is common to read comments on these surveys which indicate that prior to attending a VIP, these offenders gave little thought as to how their crime affected their victims. In addition, offenders often comment that in the future, they will think before they act. However, the impact of these panelists’ stories is probably best revealed on the faces of many of their audiences, as many of the convicted felons with whom they share are visibly moved to tears. Esparza explains, “Because offenders have moms too.”

Some may question the effectiveness of VIPs as a deterrent to criminal activity, but Dominic Camilleri, a Texas parole officer tasked with facilitating programming for violent offenders, attests to their effectiveness. Camilleri states, “It definitely impacts them. I can see a big difference, in the days immediately following a VIP,

there is an influx of my clients who want to talk about their actions, their offenses, their families and the effects on them. There is no question that it is very impactful.”

VIPs are a method by which victims can make a difference in the lives of others while having a platform to tell their unique and often painful stories

“It definitely impacts them. I can see a big difference, in the days immediately following a victim Impact Panel, there is an influx of my clients who want to talk about their actions, their offenses, their families, and the effects on them. There is no question that it is very impactful.”

of their victimization. Victims, survivors, and advocates interested in learning more about VIPs within the TDCJ VSD may contact TDCJ VSD Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse.



To contact the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, please call 512-406-5931 or send an email to [tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov).

For more information about VIPs, go to [http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/faq/victim\\_impact\\_panel.html](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/faq/victim_impact_panel.html).

# Resiliency - One Officer's Courageous Story

By: Corey Owens, Police Officer, Lubbock Police Department

On May 30, 2015 at approximately 11:30 while on duty with the Lubbock Police Department, I received a call to block off traffic on a flooded road. I arrived on scene and positioned my patrol car in the direction of oncoming traffic. About 15 minutes later, an intoxicated driver, traveling approximately 70 mph, struck my patrol car. I was standing outside of my patrol car at the time the accident happened. The force of the wreck caused my patrol car to swing around and hit me. My right foot got stuck between the tire of my car and the curb. My momentum carried me and caused most of my right foot to be torn off. Luckily, I was just a few blocks away from the closest hospital.

I woke up while being pushed down the hospital hallway with a doctor walking alongside my stretcher. The doctor advised me that I had been in an accident and that they were probably going to have to amputate my right foot. The only thing I could think of at the time was playing with my two little boys. I told the doctor that I had to be able to run and play with my boys and I could not have my foot amputated. The doctor told me they would do everything they could to save it. After seeing pictures of my foot, I then realized the doctor was just being generous. There was no way he could have saved my foot.

I spent about a week in the hospital before being released to go home.

Having no idea where my life would lead now, I had a lot of bad days. My hope was to patrol the streets of Lubbock, Texas again but I had no idea if my department would allow me back on the streets. I started rehab the week I got out of the hospital in hopes of getting back to work.

Although I had bad days, I knew I had to be strong for my wife and kids. Their lives changed just as much as mine did. My wife basically became a single mom overnight. My youngest son was just 10 months old at the time of the accident. I was unable to pick him up or carry him. I was also unable to go outside and chase my 3-year old around the yard. I could not wait to get my first prosthetic.

In August of 2015, I received my first prosthetic. It was different, but exciting, because I met my goal of

walking again. Now my goal was to continue to get better so I could return back to work. I continued to rehab to get my leg stronger. In August of 2016, I returned back to work on light duty. I was released for full duty in December of 2016. Still not knowing if my department was going to let me return to the streets, I waited. In February of 2017, I was advised that I would be returning back to shift and working patrol again.

I knew I had to get better not only for myself, but for my family too. I didn't have time to get depressed or down on myself. I could not quit. I had a ton of support from family, friends and the community. I look back on it now and know it could have been much worse. The good Lord definitely blessed me that day!



*Corey Owens, Police Officer, Lubbock Police Department*

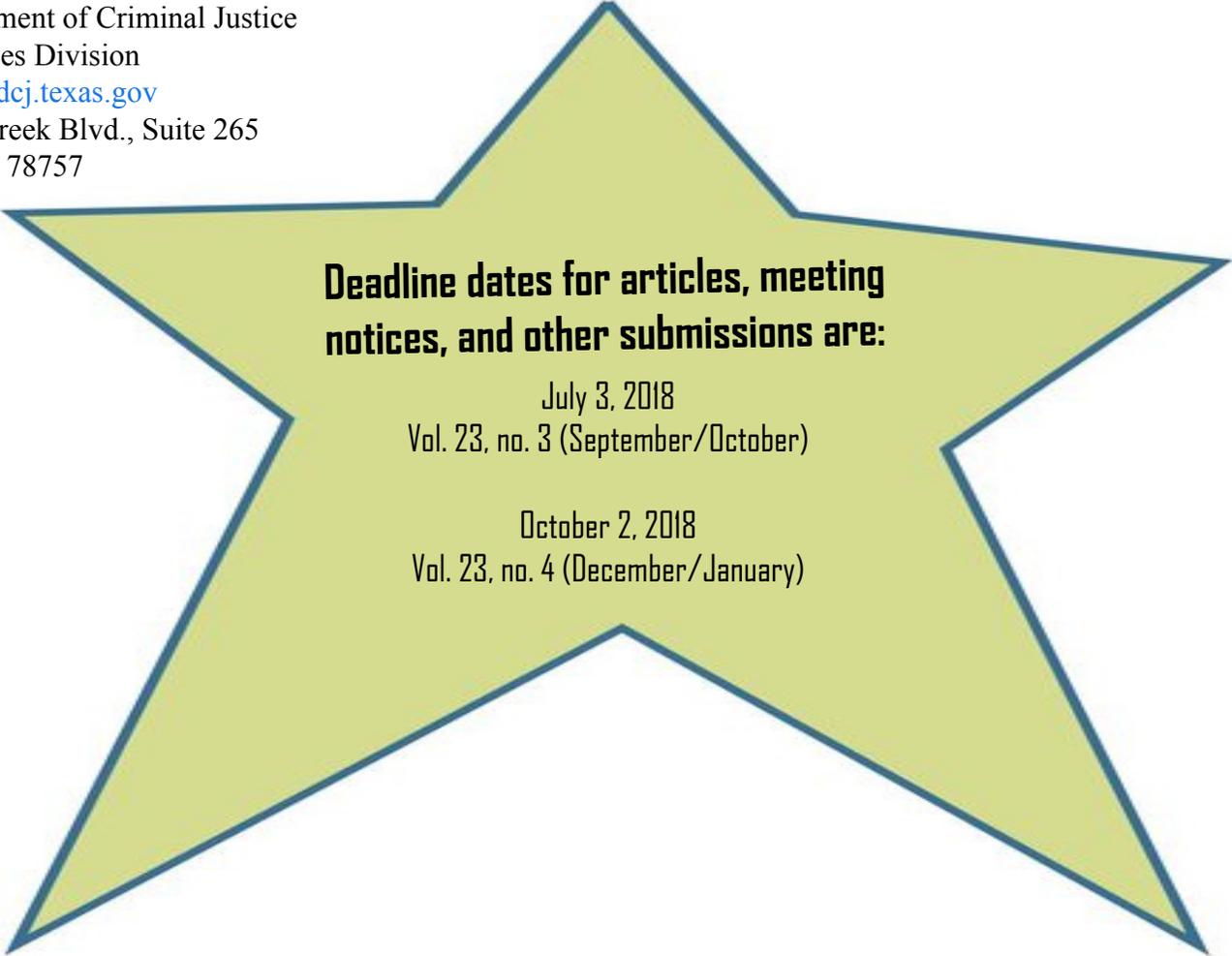
# INFORMATION ABOUT *THE VICTIM'S INFORMER*...

The Victim's Informer e-newsletter is published quarterly. Articles and other submissions should be sent to the 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](mailto:tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov). If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles, meeting notices, and other submissions are identified in the star-shaped box below. 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 website by going to [http://tdcj.texas.gov/publications/victim\\_informer\\_newsletter.html](http://tdcj.texas.gov/publications/victim_informer_newsletter.html). If you wish, we will notify you via e-mail each time The Victim's Informer becomes available on the TDCJ VSD website and provide an electronic link to The Victim's Informer. Subscribe/Unsubscribe/Update your e-mail address here: [https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim\\_informer\\_mailing\\_list.php](https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_informer_mailing_list.php).

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### **Deadline dates for articles, meeting notices, and other submissions are:**

July 3, 2018  
Vol. 23, no. 3 (September/October)

October 2, 2018  
Vol. 23, no. 4 (December/January)