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Congratulations State Victim Assistance Academy Graduates!

By Larry Nelson



The first West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy was held on the beautiful campus of West Virginia State University from July 26 through 31, 2009. The Academy's first day brought to reality the dream and faithful efforts of a dedicated group of individuals. The primary partners in this initiative were West Virginia State University, the West Virginia Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the West Virginia Crime Victim Compensation Fund, supported by eight other federal, state, and community-based organizations. The project is funded by a three-year grant from the

US Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime. The Academy's goal is the delivery of a comprehensive, academically-based, fundamental education for victim assistance providers, victim advocates, criminal justice personnel, and allied professionals who routinely work with crime victims. Through the creation and implementation of this Academy, we hope to improve the level of knowledge and skills of those working with crime victims in our state, thereby ultimately improving the services provided to these individuals. Crime victims deserve the best services available to help them not only navigate the criminal justice system, but begin the sometimes

long process of restoring wholeness to lives that have been shattered.

Forty-nine individuals from across West Virginia representing forty-five different agencies made up our first graduating class. After the week of education and training, mixed with fun activities and trips, all were eager to take their newly-acquired skills and knowledge back to their own communities. Quoting Sharon Webb, from the Huntington CONTACT Rape Crisis Center "This was an intense week where I felt I broadened my perspective on victim experiences and gained a very good overview of issues relating to victims of all crime." "Collaboration" was a common thread throughout all that was taught during the

week. The attendees developed new friendships as well as professional relationships that will aid in their efforts. Some of the training topics were: Impact of Crime; Navigating the Criminal Justice System; Victim's Rights; Case Management; Crime Victim Fund; Death Notification; and Mental Health Issues. Nineteen different topics were addressed, delivered by twenty-three different instructors. We feel that the Academy is the initial step to providing consistency and continuity to victim service provider training, thereby ensuring that victims throughout West Virginia receive the same comprehensive services.

Operation Reach Out Expands

By Nicole Reed



Operation Reach Out in celebration of National Crime Victims Rights Week 2009

During the 2009 National Crime Victims Rights Week, Operation Reach Out hosted events held in Charleston at the State Capitol Complex, in Wheeling at the YWCA, and new this year, in Parkersburg at the City Park. Charleston had its 3rd annual field trip for middle school students, while Wheeling hosted workshops tailored to preschool children along with a blood drive. Parkersburg held a community event that included finger- printing of children. All venues had GREAT success in reaching the citizens of their respective communities, and in offering them education on crime prevention, awareness, and available victim services across the State. Attendees enjoyed cotton candy, popcorn, and snow cones, as well as the Jupiter Jump, obstacle course, balloons, and face-painting. The best part was that IT WAS ALL FREE! It is estimated that we were able to serve between 4,000 and 5,000 people. The committee is very EXCITED to report that we are looking forward to working with South Carolina, which has expressed an interest in hosting Operation Reach Out there. Anyone interested in starting an event in their area, please contact:

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Victims' Memorial Flag

Boone County Celebrates

By Carol Martin

The 2009 celebration of National Crime Victims Rights Week began a little early in Boone County, WV. April 21 was the date for the first of five events to celebrate victim survival and make the public aware of victims' rights and needs. These events were planned by the Boone County Victim Services Coordinator, the Victim Services Advisory Board, and the Boone

County Crime Victim Volunteers. The public was invited to attend all events. Several news articles publicized the activities, the local radio station announced the events for several weeks in advance, and Crime Victim Volunteers placed many flyers and posters throughout the county. April 21, April 23, and April 30 were the dates for the first annual "Kings of the Court" Basketball Tournament between law enforcement offi-

cers and local attorneys. While in the courtrooms of Boone County, law enforcement officers and local attorneys battle daily for the rights of Boone County citizens, sometimes on the same playing field and sometimes at opposite ends of that field, but always with the sincere desire to "win" the battle for justice. While the title "Kings of the Court" is a light-hearted play on words

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Boone County Celebrates (continued)

for these two teams, the battle on the basketball court was anything but light-hearted. The teams went head to head, playing hard to earn some good-natured bragging rights. Game one was played on April 21 at Van High School, game two on April 23 at Sherman High School, and the final game on April 30 at Scott High School. The local law enforcement officers proved to be too much for the attorneys and court staff, winning all three games and putting next year's tournament on a friendly "road for revenge."

During the ballgames, the Victim Services Coordinator and the Boone County Crime Victim Volunteers were present to answer questions for the public, and information tables were set up at each game. The Crime Victim Volunteers purchased t-shirts for the players. The shirts featured the 2009 NCVRW logo on the back, and the Scale of Justice encircled with the words "Justice for Crime Victims" on the front. Two of the three games were well-attended, and next year will probably bring an even bigger crowd.

April 27, 12:30 p.m. marked the raising of a new Victims' Memorial Flag near the Victims' Memorial Tree on Veterans' Drive in Madison. The Boone County Crime Victim Volunteers designed and purchased a beautiful commemorative flag

to honor crime victims and their families. The official ceremony to display this flag featured brief comments by Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Parker Bazzle, and Boone County Chief Deputy Chad Barker. Approximately 30 former victims and family members attended the ceremony, which was ended in a prayer by the father of a local murder victim. The town of Madison has graciously permitted a Memorial Tree, a Memorial Marker and the Memorial Flag to be displayed in the small park located at the foot of Holly Hills in Madison. The Memorial Flag was to be on display throughout National Crime Victims' Rights Week and at other times during the year; however, on the Thursday following the Monday ceremony, the flag pole was destroyed and the flag stolen. The Crime Victim Volunteers filed a report with the Madison City Police and advertised a reward of \$250 for information leading to the arrest of those responsible, but to date, no information has come forth. This was a very disappointing and painful blow to the crime victims and their families. The Victim Volunteers wish to purchase a replacement flag and hope to display it next year in a location that would be protected from vandalism.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Boone County

Crime Victim Volunteers hosted a Red Cross Blood Drive in honor of crime victims at the Madison Methodist Church on April 28 from noon until 6:00 p.m. Response to this blood drive has been outstanding each year and this year's drive netted 43 units of blood. This event is always widely advertised in the county as an outstanding way to remember crime victims and their needs. All blood donors were served a delicious meal provided by the Crime Victim Volunteers. Red Cross staff members are always extremely complimentary of the outstanding job done by the Crime Victim Volunteers at this drive.

In addition to these events, a banner for National Crime Victims Rights Week was displayed near the Courthouse, across Route 85 in downtown Madison, for the entire commemorative week.



Flag Raising Ceremony near the Victims' Memorial Tree on Veterans' Drive in Madison, WV.



"Kings of the Court"
Basketball Tournament in Boone County

WV CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION FUND

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We're on the web!

www.legis.state.wv.us/joint/victims/main.cfm

1st Annual Allyson Christian Sweet 16 Golf Tournament

By Amy Shupe

On April 25, 2009, a golf tournament was held in Lavalette in remembrance of a victim of child abuse. Allyson Christian was three years old when her life was taken on September 19, 1996, in Cabell County. The victim's grandmother, Sue Meehling, wanted to remember her granddaughter this year, which would have marked her Sweet 16 birthday. In recognition of National Crime Victims Rights Week and the Cabell County Advisory Board, Ms. Meehling held the 1st Annual Allyson Christian Sweet 16 Golf Tournament.



Advisory Board Members from the Contact Rape Center volunteered with the tournament and provided hot dogs from Sam's for lunch. Logan's Roadhouse provided dinner for the golfers. The event was a huge success, with over 40 teams entered. It was a beautiful day for golf and for remembering Allyson Christian.

On April 26, 2009, the Board held a flag-raising ceremony to kick off National Crime Victims Rights Week. News Channel 13 covered the event, attended by members of the Board,

and victims and their families.

On May 2, 2009, the Courthouse event began at noon on the Courthouse grounds. Music was provided by a DJ, and Papa John's donated pizzas for the public. Local crime victim agencies set up information tables and there were inflatables and face-painting for the kids. Many local restaurants and stores donated gifts for the Board to give away. Raffle tickets were distributed, then drawn for the free prizes.. The event ended at 4:00 p.m.