

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #38- April 2015

Just a Thought

Ever wonder what the Victim Service Providers Network is, and how this organization has made an impact in the lives of its members and the community? Read this wonderful essay on how VSPN made a profound difference in one family's lives.

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Web Links

You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered.

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Save the Date!

Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy this spring!

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Alumni Showcase

Read Jessica Roman's recounting of her experiences at the Academy last year, and how she has made sure to "Keep in Touch" with all of her fellow alums.

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News from the Field

Know what's been going on in Annapolis recently? Catch up on the most recent bills debated, passed, and enacted.

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Best Practices

As victim advocates, we know that there is no shortage of people who need our assistance. To best meet the demands of our job, we are going to need to be more forward-thinking in our approach. Read this insightful essay on what that means, and how we can achieve that goal.

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Just a thought...

Paying it Forward

The Victim Service Providers Network [VSPN] - Carrying on the mission of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

The Victim Service Providers Network started as the Roper Victim Assistance Academy Alumni Association in 2004 after the very first academy class. Everyone who completes the 40 hour Academy is automatically granted membership into the organization, and can enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. What makes VSPN so special is that it has evolved into so much more than just an alumni association. VSPN recruits academy attendees, publishes a quarterly newsletter, alerts members of important issues when they arise in the field,

provides free trainings, hosts networking and fundraising events, and even coordinates charity events out in the community.

One such charity event the VSPN co-sponsored this past December along with "The Journey Continues [TCJ]" a breast cancer survivors group in Baltimore, was a community holiday gift drive to benefit a Maryland family who has been a victim of crime who needs some assistance and holiday cheer. VSPN and TJC members were asked to collect donated gifts, food, money, etc. from their community that would then be presented to the family at VSPN's annual holiday party. This was the third time VSPN has participated in this initiative, and once again, it was a huge success and provided some wonderfully touching moments.

This year's family, nominated by VSPN's Dr. Dorothy "Dot" Holley, was a single mother of two children, a 10 year old



daughter and 12 year old son. The family was invited to the VSPN holiday party as the guests of honor and to receive their gifts. Through the generosity of both VSPN and TJC members, the family received everything they had written on their "wish lists." Mom received several bags of canned and boxed food for the family, along with gift cards; the children each received some clothes and toys. Needless to say, the family was extremely overwhelmed by the generosity shown to them. The children were so sweet and appreciative, and the excitement in their eyes when opening their gifts was unforgettable. As a token of their appreciation, all three later wrote a thank-you note, and the children drew some pictures to express their gratitude. Dot also wrote a note to VSPN, expressing her gratitude to the members for helping this family have their holiday wishes fulfilled. Although many of us spend most of our days dealing with the ugly side of humanity, it is moments and experiences such as these that help to remind us how blessed we are, and what a special group of people

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings Alumni!

Spring has finally arrived! It has been such a cold, cloudy winter, the sights and sounds of spring sure are a welcome sight!

Another welcome sight on my calendar is the Academy! Can you believe it is time to start recruiting new people to be a part of this wonderful group? Think outside the box - are there any judges you know who might be interested in learning how to better meet victims' needs? How about healthcare workers, such as hospital personnel? What about clergy or teachers? There are so many people who actually work with victims of crime that we often overlook when recruiting, so let's make it a priority to not do so again this year. Go to www.rvaam.org and download some applications and give them to people you know who could benefit from this training. You might also want to give them a copy of the newsletter so they can read about others' Academy experiences - nothing does a better job of convincing people the value of the Academy than to hear directly from those who have gone through it.

Don't forget to also mark on your calendar the dates of this year's Academy so you too can come back and participate in the advanced trainings, as well as interact with this year's attendees. Information about the advanced trainings will be forthcoming shortly, so keep your ears and eyes open for that information.

I look forward to meeting this year's Academy class and catching up with each and every one of you.

Wishing you all the best. Until next time ...

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII
bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org

"All our dreams can come true - if we have the courage to pursue them." - Walt Disney



Web Links

Although we have a virtual library at our fingertips every time we turn on the computer, we often lose sight of the forest through the

trees just trying to navigate the world-wide web. Here are a few sites that relate to this issue's "Just a Thought" ... happy surfing!

Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland

This website provides information about the history, mission, and purpose of RVAAM, as well as links to the Alumni Association and the certification process. To learn more, go to www.rvaam.org

National Center for Victims of Crime

This website is a wonderful tool for connecting victims of crime to a myriad of resources. On the website you can learn more about the programs NCVV offers, as well as the various training opportunities they sponsor. The website also provides updated information on the latest news on victims rights initiatives and has a resource page where you can retrieve current statistics and publications on victim-related issues. Go to: <http://www.victimsofcrime.org>

National Organization for Victim Assistance.

The NOVA website provides resources for both victims of crime and victim advocates. Advocates can find out about upcoming trainings and learn more about the national crisis responder credentials program. Go to: <http://www.trynova.org>

Office for Victims of Crime

The OVC website offers the latest up to date news on victims' rights and advocacy initiatives, as well as provides resources for victims and victim providers. Go to: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc>

Maryland Crime Victim Resource Center

The Maryland Crime Victim Resource Center provides assistance to all victims of crime and provides an array of services, including legal assistance, court accompaniment, assistance with financial issues, and referrals to a host of support services around the state. For more information, go to <http://www.mdcrimevictims.org/victim-services/>

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Victim Services

This website offers the latest news on victims' rights and a myriad of resources that are available. The site also includes information for victims of specific types of crime (e.g., children, human trafficking, etc.) to help direct them to the appropriate resources. For more information, go to:

http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/victim_assistance

Save the Date

Death Notification Training - Breaking the News with Compassion

Tuesday, May 5th, 2015,
 8:00am-4:00pm at the Baltimore Child Abuse Center -
 2300 N. Charles St., Baltimore



One of the most difficult things some of us will have to do in the context of our jobs is notify someone that they have lost a loved one. While this news is never easy to hear, how we deliver it to the surviving family members can make a world of difference. Come to

this training to learn how you can deliver such news in a compassionate manner.

All are welcome but space is limited to 35 people, so register early. RSVP's are accepted by phone (410) 396-6147 or via the web at www.bcaci.org.

2015 RVAAM Academy

June 1st - 5th, 2015, Bon Secours Spiritual Retreat Center, Marriottsville, MD

Mark your calendars! The 12th annual RVAAM Academy is scheduled for the first week of June at the lovely Bon Secours. Go to the RVAAM website (www.rvaam.org) to download a copy of this year's application and pass it along to your colleagues!

Want to learn about how you can become a Certified Victim Assistance Specialist in Maryland? Then come join us!

Tuesday, June 23rd, 2015, from 1:30-3:30pm at the Baltimore Child Abuse Center - 2300 N. Charles St., Baltimore

This past February, Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII, taught a class at the BCAC on how to become a Victim Assistance Specialist in the state of Maryland. Those who attended the event reported they walked away with a much better understanding of the application process, as well as the testing procedures.

If you are interested in learning how you too can become a certified Victim Assistance Specialist, then please attend this second informational session sponsored by VSPN. Space is limited so reserve your spot today! You can either call the BCAC at (410) 396-6147, or go to www.bcaci.org to register.

Alumni Showcase

"K.I.T.!"

Ever take a look back at your high-school yearbook and see all of the messages that your classmates wrote? They usually ended with "K.I.T." for "keep in touch," followed by their number. How many of you have actually called up one of those classmates up to find out how they are doing since you last saw them at graduation? I'm betting few of us have. But this is not the experience I have had since I graduated from the Roper Victim Assistance Academy on June 6, 2014! Since graduating 10 months ago, here are just a few of the messages I have received from my classmates - "Hey, I've updated my phone number." "We work near each other, let's meet for lunch!" "Can you help me find a car?" and "You have an Eric King in the lobby to see you." I've also received numerous emails inquiring about the claims process at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, pictures from our RVAAM graduation, invitations to special events, tags in Facebook updates, virtual hugs to boost my spirit, and countless group text messages and phone calls to keep me in the loop. Every one of these "touches" has reminded me that the friendships I built at the Academy has not only continued, but gotten stronger.

This got me thinking back about my experiences that week. During art therapy session we all participated in one evening, each member of the class was asked to make a *mandala*. (While there are numerous definitions of this term, the one consistent element to the definition is that it is circular pattern, kind of like a kaleidoscope). At the end of the project, the instructor comment-

ed that everyone seemed to be rather introspective while working on their creations. This despite the fact that there were many extroverts in the group. But then something really special happened. The instructor asked us to hang our individual mandala on the large mandala frame she had placed at the front of the room. After we each placed our individual creation on the frame, we stepped back to examine the new, collective creation. The final product was both unique and breathtaking. This exercise was able to capture both what makes us unique as individuals (or our individual mandalas), but also showed how well we can "fit" together as a diverse group of advocates, activists, clergy, law enforcement, counselors, case managers,

social workers, students, and volunteers. You just have to be willing to step out of your comfort zone, and your respective niche in victim services, and get to know all of the different and wonderful people who have also devoted their lives to assisting victims of crime.

In the words of Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." So even though we all have moved forward from the Academy, let us continue to build on the friendships we built at the Academy and work together to be effective leaders of change. Let us continue to lean on one another for support, and practice using the tools we learned at the Academy and from one another, to build a better future for all crime victims in Maryland.

Essay contributed by Jessica Roman (Class of 2014). Jessica works at the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and is a proud native of New York.





Alumni Updates

It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye

another year has passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...

Look at Our Movers & Shakers!

William "Archie" Griffin (Class of 2008) - Archie just received the 2014 Officer of the Year award from Walden Security! Each year Walden Security recognizes officers who provide exceptional security services above and beyond the already high standards set by the company. This award was given to Archie for demonstrating initiative, leadership, and consistent outstanding service. Well done Archie!

Ruby Nelson (Class of 2006) - On March 18th, Ruby successfully defended her dissertation entitled "Organizational culture and victorious trauma." Next time you see Ruby, be sure to give Dr. Nelson a big congratulatory hug!

News From the Field

Everyone knows that the field of victim services is always evolving. The challenge is to find a way to keep on top of all the changes ... we're here to help!

The following is proposed legislation for 2015.

* **Notification in Cold Cases - House Bill 501/Senate Bill 501:** Unless disclosure would impede or hinder a law enforcement investigation, this proposal provides notification to victims and victim's representatives in cold cases involving crimes of vio-

lence when DNA evidence of a suspected perpetrator exists, is entered into the DNA database, and when a potential identification is received. (Note: the identity of the potential perpetrator will not be released, just the fact that an identity has been made).



* **Improvements in the Collection of Restitution - House Bill 540/Senate Bill 561:** Similar to legislation passed in the 2014 legislative session for child support, this proposal would provide for the interception of video lottery winnings from those who are delinquent in the restitution they have been ordered to pay to the victims and/or victim's representatives.

Best Practices

It's Time to Move Forward

Best practices and methodologies derived from practice experience and research is what led the Office for Victims of Crime to introduce the State Victim Assistance Academy (SVAA) initiative in 1998. "The purpose of SVAA is to provide fundamental, comprehensive, and academically based education and training for victim service providers, victim advocates, criminal justice personnel, and allied professionals who routinely deal with crime victims. " As of 2012, there were 37 active academies across the United States (<http://ojp.gov/ovc/training/svaa.html#svaalist>)

The academies offer courses of study to provide a baseline of knowledge and skills and consistency with the

current needs. The challenge for academy administrators and coordinators is keeping pace with the rapidly increasing demands placed on service providers in the field. Constructing one-week training schedules with all of the core topics, as well as several others, to round out the list is not quite as easy as it once was. The daily headlines are a constant reminder that there are new types of crimes and victimization that are stressing an already overburdened system. The need for specialized instruction on topics such as LGBTQ, bullying, cyber-crimes, identity theft, hate crimes, and human trafficking, are just a few of the emerging issues victim service providers are looking for more information and training on. Yet most service providers would agree that it doesn't really matter what the official crime statistics indicate because there is a steady stream of victims that need our help.

With this in mind, and as a means of keeping up with the growing demands, a paradigm shift could help. The introduction of "Forward Thinking" can equip victim assistance academy students with an innovative way of addressing new issues and increasing demands. Forward thinking is a type of prob-

lem-solving. By deliberately looking ahead with an eye on meeting new challenges, creatively moving beyond the walls of resis-

tance, and building improved relationships, can lead to the formation of highly collaborative processes. This type of process is frequently used in inmate reentry programs. Corrections officials align groups of stakeholders to actively interface with the person in as many places as possible: home, church, school, and social settings, in order to provide the support and assistance they need.



The use of collaborative processes with a forward thinking overlay introduces the students to the notion that they can serve as change agents in their respective agencies. When assisting victims of bullying, for example, we now know the value of an available network of providers to actively assist and support victims. Repeatedly we have seen the consequences of a young person slipping through the cracks, and as a result they feel alone and humiliated. Some of these youth, sadly, have responded by taking their own lives. But one has to ask, how many of those lives could have been saved if a forward thinking service provider would have initiated a process to create a suitable and integrated support system?

The Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland introduces some and reminds others of the meaningful reasons they were drawn to helping people that are forced to face significant life-altering events. I submit to you that the use of forward thinking can lead to cultural shifts one person at a time. Embracing such a paradigm will lead to the formation of formal and informal working groups and help to create relationships that can contribute to resolving both short and long-term challenges to providing victims the comprehensive and necessary care they deserve.

So let's make this pledge to become forward thinkers. As Helen Keller wisely noted, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Essay contributed by Keith Gethers (Class of 2011).

Certification News

Do you want to be more recognized in the field of Victim Services? Do you want to show people that you are a cut above the rest? Then become a certified Victim Assistance Specialist in the State of Maryland! Social Workers started here too

and look how far they have come over the past 10 years! Victim Service Professionals need to unite and do the same thing - so take this important step for your career. Go to www.rvaam.org to learn more about the certification process and download a copy of the application today!

There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:

* **Level I (VASI)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) multiple choice exam; e) \$50 application processing fee

* **Level II (VASII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay / short answer exam; e) \$75 application processing fee.

* **Level III (VASIII)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.

There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates

who want to remain current with their certification:

* **Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.

* **Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete written exam; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.

* **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victims' Rights training and 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) complete oral presentation; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials and study guides for the written exams are available online at www.rvaam.org (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.



Just a Thought (Cont.)

we work with. A special thanks to Marlene King, President of “The Journey Continues” for co-sponsoring this year’s event and helping to make it such a memorable one. I, for one, am really looking forward to next year’s holiday gift drive.

If you’d like to learn more about VSPN or help coordinate next year’s holiday gift drive, please email me, Linda Wright Garnett, at lfair@ubalt.edu

Essay contributed by Linda Wright Garnett (Class of 2005)

December 26, 2014

Dear Linda and VSPN Members,

Thank you so much for providing Ms. Rogers and her family with a meaningful, most memorable Christmas. As expressed in my nomination of this family, they have faced many challenges, disappointments, and setbacks. I will confess that Ms. Rogers never believed that Christmas would be provided as promised. Her life has been marred by so many broken promises that she has a tough time believing that good things can happen for her. Well, you changed all of that! Your generosity of time, gifts, and spirit overwhelmed her, and it shifted the emotional energy of the entire household; I can honestly say that I have never seen them so joyful! People were actually laughing and interacting positively with each other, a rarity for them. Thank you, again, for being such a blessing to this family!

In gratitude,

*Dorothy Adamson Holley, Ph.D.,
LCSW-C*

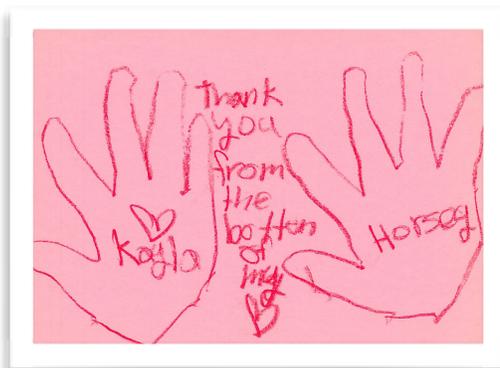
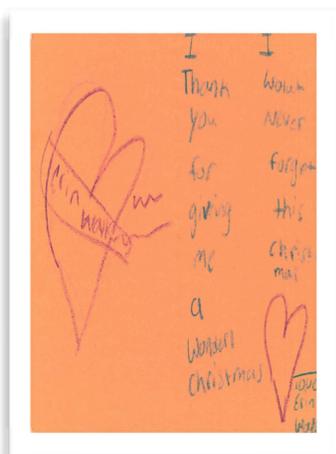
January 2015

Dean Linda and everyone involved,

I just wanted to say thank you. First of all for taking the time to shop and cook for my kids and our family like we were your family. The truth is, me and my children were not looking forward to the holidays. Financially and emotionally, I was done and they knew there was not going to be Christmas at all. But then God showed me with a little HOPE, anything is possible, even if you don't see it coming. So not only am I thankful for what you did for us but for giving me and my family HOPE AND A CHRISTMAS WE WILL NEVER FORGET!

Sincerely,

Sharon V. Rogers



What do you want to hear? Have any news to share?

Are you itching to learn more about a particular issue in the field of victim services? The Editorial Board is always looking for new topics to profile in the newsletter that would be beneficial for our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have about a topic to profile in one of our upcoming newsletters to Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org ... We also are happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!

Alumni Directory

The 2014 Alumni Directory, which includes the addition of the most recent Academy class members is now available for distribution. However, we still would like your help to keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information changes, please contact Debbie Bradley via email at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org or by phone at (410) 836-5490.

Editorial Board

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Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in July 2015