

# VICTIMS' RIGHTS BRIEF

For Arizona's Justice System Administrators, Practitioners and Advocates

Vol. X No. 2

January 2008

## Distinguished Service Award Winners 2007

Arizona is a national leader in support for crime victims' rights. Thousands of people across our state work to meet the needs of victims, to understand why they are victimized, and to promote justice and healing for every victim, in every case. Their work helps to transform victims into survivors. On August 17, 2007, the ACVS Statewide Victims' Rights Conference Awards Luncheon honored victim service providers for another year of hard work and dedication. Below is a list of all the winners.

**Distinguished Service Award for Advocacy/Direct Services-** an individual or group that has evidenced passion and perseverance in promoting victims' legal rights as well as crucial services to meet victims' needs for recovery from the shattering effects of crime.

### *The Parents of Murdered Children, Valley of the Sun Chapter*

- This chapter has been providing services for crime victims since January of 1986 with a staff comprised only of volunteers. They started with only six members and currently have a membership of more than 1,000 families locally. The chapter provides services of advocacy, education, awareness, prevention and support for families who have lost a child or loved one to murder. This is accomplished through four support meetings each month.
- Besides providing direct service, the chapter is also actively involved with issues and legislative efforts involving crime victims' rights. Members participate on impact panels in all Arizona prisons as well as other agencies. The chapter also hosted two National POMC Conferences in Phoenix.
- Member families express that the grieving process in the aftermath of murder makes a support group, such as POMC, both critical and extremely beneficial to families in helping them feel less isolated, providing advocacy, educating them on the process they are enduring and supporting them through their long journey. Many of POMC's members choose to become advocates for victims and victims' rights, to change laws and to help others along this journey that no one should ever have to endure. Through their work, they give meaning to their pain and honor the lives of their loved ones.

### *Jack Saunders*

- When Mr. Saunders began his work in victim advocacy more than 10 years ago, he did so as a volunteer then as a paid victim advocate in the Bullhead City's Victim Rights Crisis Intervention Program. He assisted crime victims and victims of circumstance by going to crime scenes and the local hospitals during all times of the day and night.
- He has assisted victims and their families at drownings, boat accidents, homicides, domestic violence scenes, child neglect situations, DUI crash scenes and suicides. Jack also assists with the difficult task of providing death notification to next of kin. He has been there to help victims meet immediate needs such as shelter, food, referrals for immediate assistance and later help with court forms and assistance through the prosecution process.

- Jack has said that he feels he is giving back to the community in his retirement years and was restless when he retired after 38 years as a teamster truck driver. He enjoys the personal interaction and help he can provide to those in troubled times. His grandfatherly appearance and wisdom is also a reassuring presence to many victims.

**Distinguished Service Award for Service Coordination-** a group of individuals, or an organization that has been instrumental in establishing comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary approaches to serving crime victims within its community or jurisdiction.

*University of Arizona's OASIS Program*

- The OASIS program was created in 1996 to assist the victims/survivors of sexual assault and relationship violence in the University of Arizona community.
- The reason this program is exemplary is because of the coordination between the Dean of Students, Vice-President of Student Affairs, the University Police Department, Residence Life, Associated Students of the University, the U of A college of Public Health, the Tucson Police Department, the Brewster Center and Wingspan to provide assistance to its clients.
- OASIS used to be completely grant funded until 2003 when University President Peter Likins successfully identified permanent funding for the program. The intent of the state funding is to contribute to the quality of the overall campus climate, to the safety, empowerment and healing of victims, to the accountability of offenders, to the success of students remaining productive in pursuit of their degrees and to the success of the staff and faculty.
- Over 11 years of operation, OASIS has provided care and service to hundreds of victims. They are staffed by highly qualified professionals and they have helped to raise awareness to the mission of reducing the incidence of sexual assault and interpersonal violence in the UA community.

**Distinguished Service Award for Public Service-** an individual that has made an invaluable contribution or played a critical role in serving the public and improving the treatment of crime victims.

*Detective Jack Ballentine- Phoenix Police Department*

- Detective Jack Ballentine joined the Phoenix Police Department in 1978 and has served the citizens of Phoenix for 29 years. Jack has recently retired from the Violent Crimes Bureau, Homicide Unit where he worked as a detective and has handled numerous high profile murders and officer involved shooting cases.
- He is the developer and lead instructor of the Rio Solado Criminal Investigations Program, used by departments statewide to certify their criminal investigations detectives. For the past several years, he brings his classes of detectives to the Valley of the Sun, Parents of Murdered Children meetings to ensure that all new detectives hear firsthand the plight of survivors of homicide.
- He was also chosen by Supreme Court Chief Justice Ruth V. McGregor to serve on the Arizona Supreme Court's Commission on Victims' in the Courts.

**Distinguished Service Award for Innovative Practices-** an individual or an organization has developed programs to serve victims in a new way, provided services where none previously existed, or used technology to assist victims.

### *Keith Perkins*

- In January 2001, Keith left a lucrative law partnership to form the Never Again Foundation Legal Services, a non-profit charity. The Foundation is dedicated to preventing abuse and promoting healing through *pro bono* representation of low-income women, children, and vulnerable adult victims of physical and sexual abuse in civil lawsuits.
- In 2003, Keith authored the landmark “Arizona Crime Victims’ Rights” video, which aired on public television throughout Arizona to hundreds of thousands of viewers. This video employs his unique “3 Doors” explanation of the three-court system in easy to understand language for the average layperson. It has been used extensively throughout Arizona as an educational tool. He is currently working on an updated and Spanish language version.
- Keith has successfully advocated changes to the laws. Victims are now given an additional year to file civil actions, providing for a one-year statute of limitations after the disposition of the criminal case. Divorce judges may now consider all damages and judgments if one spouse committed a crime against the other or their child.
- The Never Again Foundation is the first and only organization of its kind in the nation. It is his goal to have a Never Again Foundation branch in every state. Never before has the power of the civil system been so accessible to victims of crime regardless of their income.

**Distinguished Service Award for Leadership-** an individual, a group of individuals, or an organization who, while endeavoring to promote better treatment of crime victims, has exercised vision, initiative, commitment, excellence, service to others, cooperation, and integrity, thereby serving as a model for others.

### *Cathy Cermak, the Domestic Violence Unit Supervisor of the Pima County Adult Probation Department*

- Because of the efforts of Cathy Cermak, all victims of domestic violence reported by the Pima County Sheriff’s Office are contacted within 48 hours to ensure they have the referrals, resources and support they need to begin the healing process, navigate the criminal justice system and move forward with their lives.
- With STOP Grant funding that Cathy was instrumental in obtaining, all serious first time and all repeat offenders are handled by one well-trained and committed judge and one well-trained and committed prosecutor in a new specialized domestic violence court that operates two full days a week. In the past, DV offenders were able to exploit the gaps in information sharing and cooperation between law enforcement, prosecution, courts, probation and victim services to avoid accountability and continue to abuse victims. This year, many of those gaps have been filled and victims are gaining confidence in the ability and desire of the system to work on their behalf.
- Ms. Cermak spearheaded the effort, initiated the discussions, built consensus among disparate interests for victim-centered systemic change, and overcame what others would consider insurmountable obstacles. She never lost sight of the goal to better serve victims of domestic violence by providing them with the services they need to overcome the trauma, navigate the criminal justice system, secure offender accountability and live a safer future. As a result, she built a team that continues to work together in ways never before thought possible.
- Cathy Cermak has been with the department for twenty-one years and in her current position for more than nine. She has distinguished herself as a hard working officer of the court dedicated to justice, fairness and victims’ rights. She brought together representatives from various organizations in pursuit of Tucson’s first Domestic Violence Court. Because of her vision, offender accountability and victim services have since risen to new levels of excellence.

*Michael Eyer, Victim Assistance Caseworker for the Glendale Police Department*

- Mr. Eyer has been providing exemplary services to victims of crime in Glendale for the past 21 years. The Victim Assistance Unit has gone through many changes during his tenure and he has provided the stability and encouragement needed to focus the attention on crime victims.
- His commitment to victims, the unit's mission and the staff is indisputable. Mike consistently steps up and takes on additional responsibilities whenever needed. He is willing to take on extra on-call duties, assist staff, train volunteers and interns, host display tables for community events, write grants, design and repair computer databases, translate brochures, install door locks for victims, or paint the forensic exam rooms at the West Valley Advocacy Center.
- Mike designed the Victim Assistance Case Record database. This database facilitates the sharing of information among the staff, tracking of the casework and compiling statistics for grant purposes. He also designed the Glendale City Prosecutor's Office Victim's Rights notification database. These two databases are included in the Attorney General's Office's Victim Services Best Practices Manual. He also used his skills to design the Sex Offender notification database for the detectives at the West Valley Advocacy Center as well as the website for the Victim Assistance Unit.

Editor's Note: Please accept my humblest apologies for neglecting to recognize the 2006 winners. Here is a list of the 2006 winners, as they too deserve full recognition of their efforts.

**Distinguished Service Award for Leadership**

*Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Ronald Reinstein*

- Judge Reinstein was named the chair of the Supreme Court's Commission on Victims in the Courts.
- Judge Reinstein has been on the forefront of ensuring the balance of victims' rights with defendants' rights, and assisted with the evolution of victims' rights over 15 years.

**Distinguished Service Award for Service Coordination**

*City of Tempe's Crisis Response Team – CARE 7*

- This program provides on-scene response to victims of crime and other trauma 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When the program began in 1997 it was a weekend volunteer response team.
- The Care 7 team is comprised of professionally trained staff and volunteers that respond to crime scenes within 10 minutes.
- The team provides services such as information and referral services, emergency shelter and basic needs like food and clothing. The program also provides follow-up care and victim advocacy.
- In 2005, CARE 7 volunteers provided nearly 6,000 hours to the people of Tempe, responded to more than 1,000 calls and aided over 3,000 adults and children.

**Distinguished Service Award for Advocacy Direct Services**

*Court Appointed Special Advocates of Arizona program (CASA)*

- CASA volunteers donate time and efforts to ensure and protect the best interests of children in that are in the dependency system.
- CASA volunteers form a relationship with their assigned child or children, advocate for their needs as well as push for a permanency plan that allows the child to have a childhood.

- Volunteers from all walks of life volunteer in this program and sometimes they are the most consistent person in a child's life during a frightening time and they need someone to count on.
- In 2005, Arizona CASA volunteers donated 65,923 hours to their cases providing more than \$1 million in value to Arizona.

### **Distinguished Service Award for Innovative Practices**

#### *Pinal County Sheriff's Office of Criminal Investigation Bureau of Volunteer Services Department*

- Created in 2004, this department provides a multi-faceted service program to address the needs of victims' and surviving family members.
- The program counts on retired law enforcement personnel and citizen volunteers to provide services.
- This program also taps the experience of retired law enforcement individuals with investigation experience to work on unsolved, cold, homicide cases. Recent advances in DNA technology now provide the avenue for evidence to be re-examined.
- In 2005, this department provided 5,000 hours of volunteer time, talent and expertise to crime victims in Pinal County.



The Victims' Rights Brief is published by the Arizona Attorney General's Office of Victim Services, which remains wholly responsible for its content. Questions regarding content can be directed to Mel Williams at (602) 542-8409. To learn more about victims' rights via the Internet, email us at [victimrights@azag.gov](mailto:victimrights@azag.gov) or visit us at [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov).