

Twenty Tips for Community Outreach

Twenty creative ideas that can tie into this year's theme -- "Victims' Voices: Silent No More" -- are offered to stimulate your thinking and National Crime Victims' Rights Week planning efforts. Many of the concepts presented here have been successfully sponsored in past years by state and local victim service organizations and coalitions.

These suggestions can be implemented as described, or tailored to fit the particular needs or style of your organization. The ultimate key to success is the involvement of as many different individuals and organizations -- from the justice system, as well as from the community -- in planning and implementing your 1999 National Crime Victims' Rights Week activities.

1. Promote victims' voices through **Victim Impact Panels**, which can be sponsored at a variety of forums (such as community outreach sessions, schools, civic organizations, and institutional or community corrections settings). Ask victim participants to address this year's theme -- "Victims' Voices: Silent No More" -- by discussing why listening to victims is important, and how speaking out has personally helped them in the aftermath of their victimization.
2. Ask leaders of the faith community to **offer sermons** on Sunday, April 25 relevant to this year's theme (the **sample sermon** included in this *Resource Guide* can be provided to offer inspiration).
3. Hold a **crime victim rally**. A "Bear Witness to Violence" Mask Rally was sponsored in 1998 by *Victim Services of New York City*. All participants attending the NCVRW rally to support victims of violence -- including survivors, celebrities, and citizens of New York -- were provided with masks based on a design by artist Mimi Gross to symbolize the emotional wall victims hide behind to conceal their suffering. This creative concept can emphasize the value of listening to victims' voices, and eliminating the "mask of silence."
4. At public gatherings, lead participants in a "**moment of silence**" to honor victims, followed by a song or poetry reading that symbolizes the power of the human voice in seeking peace and justice.

5. Create a **crime victims' rights quilt**. Such a quilt was created for the 1998 Oregon observance of NCVRW. Letters were sent to quilt guilds around the state, and the Rogue Valley Piecemakers agreed to take on the project. Muslin squares were sent to a victim assistance agency in each of the 36 counties and, after signatures of residents were collected, the squares were returned to the quilt guild. The quilt was then designed and constructed and, later, dedicated to the people of Oregon in a ceremony at the State Capitol during 1998 NCVRW.
6. Create a **crime victims' advocacy tree**. Provide victims, advocates and allied justice professionals with index cards inscribed with this year's commemorative artwork and theme. Ask them to describe in one or two sentences how "the voice of the victim" has had a positive impact on your community. Tie the cards with colorful ribbons onto a tree near the courthouse or city hall.
7. Ask local domestic violence organizations/shelters or children's advocacy organizations to provide **artwork from children** who have been victims of or witnesses to violence. Then sponsor a display at a public forum (such as the library, mall or courthouse) that includes educational information about the impact of violence on children, utilizing this year's theme to emphasize the importance of giving child victims a voice.
8. Hold a **bowling fundraiser** for victims. Since 1997, the *Vito A. Masi Memorial Center for Non-violence, Inc.* has sponsored a "Bowl for Non-violence" Fundraiser in Schenectady, New York. For only \$3.00, participants receive a continental breakfast, shoe rental, and three games of bowling. There is also a toy raffle -- a perfect event for family participation.
9. Involve your local or state correctional facility in designing and producing **NCVRW artwork**. Lapel buttons commemorating NCVRW in Ohio were designed and produced by inmates of the *Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction*. In addition, the Department published a book of poetry written by victims and survivors, as well as a calendar that depicts the Department's vision and programs for restorative justice that address the interests and needs of crime victims, offenders and the community.
10. Sponsor a **two-part mock trial for students**: one in which victims are *not* allowed to be present at, heard at or informed of case proceedings, and a second in which the victims'

- voice *is heard*. Lead students in a discussion of the differences in “justice” between cases in which victims are involved and have a voice, and those in which their voices are silent.
11. Utilize the camera-ready artwork in this *Guide* to produce and distribute **posters with tear-off pads** for victims who need assistance. The *Connecticut Office of Victim Services* did this in 1998, including the Office’s toll-free number and a description of available victim services. This important statewide public service and community outreach project helps victims learn how they can utilize their voices to seek justice.
 12. Utilize the **camera-ready artwork** in this *Resource Guide* to create bulletin boards, bumper stickers, bookmarks, grocery bags, and other visual depictions of the power of victims’ voices. Ask local printers or correctional work programs to donate printing services.
 13. Sponsor a **discussion group** for victims, service providers and concerned citizens that addresses the importance of “voices and choices” for victims of crime. Focus on the power that victims regain by speaking out about their experiences, as well as the importance of choices in helping them regain control over their lives in the aftermath of crime.
 14. Establish a **crime victims memorial** in your community. In Albany, New York, a crime victims memorial has been established by the *Capitol District Coalition for Crime Victims’ Rights*. Victims, their loved ones and concerned citizens can purchase engraved bricks for the nominal fee of \$15.00 to honor a victim; the brick walkway leads to a memorial rock commemorating crime victims.
 15. Sponsor a special **weekend of activities** to honor crime victims at your local college. In 1998, *Speak Out for Stephanie: The Stephanie Schmidt Foundation (SOS)* in Kansas inspired a number of creative activities. Several sororities and fraternities supported a candlelight vigil and silent walk to pay tribute to crime victims. This special event kicked off “Derby Days,” a fun-filled weekend that raised over \$5,000 for victim assistance and community service organizations. University police fingerprinted children for SOS safety passports, which contain vital and voluntary emergency information if a child is ever missing. One day was designated as “Shine Your Lights for Victims’ Rights” Day, with motorists asked to drive the entire day with their headlights on to honor victims.

16. Solicit a meeting with your **local newspaper's editorial board** , focusing on how victims' rights and services have made your community a safer and better place to live. Ask victims who have had a positive influence on public policy or community safety to accompany you. Provide editorial board members with this year's theme, along with supportive resources from this year's *Resource Guide*, and encourage them to write an editorial about the importance of victims' voices, and the contributions they have made to your community.
17. Honor victims statewide by **lowering state flags to half-mast** . In 1998, three states -- Hawaii, Maryland and Nevada -- lowered flags to half-mast in commemoration of 1998 National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This poignant tribute to victims was initiated in a letter to all governors signed by Nevada Governor Bob Miller at the request of Peggy and Gene Schmidt, co-founders of the *Speak Out for Stephanie: The Stephanie Schmidt Foundation*.
18. Invite **adult and youth choral groups** to perform at commemorative events, providing them with this year's theme to select songs that reflect the power of the human voice.
19. Ask local inmates to produce **1999 commemorative state license plates** . Inmates from the *Missouri Department of Corrections* produce Missouri state license plates that are inscribed with the slogan " 4VICTIMS," and presented as awards or commemorative plaques. Contact your Department of Corrections and/or its Victim Services Program to suggest this special project that embraces the principles of restorative justice by giving offenders the opportunity to provide a service that benefits victims of crime and those who serve them.
20. Working with your planning coalition, draft a "**wish list**" entitled "Community Choices for Victims' Voices" that indicates your needs for observing 1999 National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This can include monetary donations, volunteers, goods and services. Use the **sample letterhead** included in this *Resource Guide*, and remember to honor those who help you honor victims by publicizing their contributions and sending thank-you notes.