



Celebrating the
Victims of Crime Act

Every year, National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) spotlights our nation's response to victims of crime. The NCVRW theme for 2009 celebrates the 1984 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which established the Crime Victims' Fund and fostered 25 years of progress for victims of crime. The theme calls us to explore VOCA's history, its powerful reforms, and its network of lifelines to victims of crime. It also honors the visionaries who made VOCA a reality.

The 2009 NCVRW Resource Guide sets the stage for your NCVRW observance, and the "Maximizing Communication and Awareness" section provides a strong set of tools to amplify your messages. The following sample proclamation, speech, special events and partnership ideas, and visual display tips will help you share VOCA's impact on your community and on victims of crime.

Commemorative Calendar

In the 25 years since VOCA became law, victim service providers, allied professionals, and individual advocates have found many ways to honor and help victims of crime. Some have set aside a day, week, or month to educate the public about the impact of crime (e.g., Crime Stoppers Month, National Stalking Awareness Month, National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week, National Missing Children's Day); honor law enforcement agencies (e.g., National Peace Officers' Memorial Day, National Police Week); or promote public safety (e.g., America's Safe Schools Week, Week Without Violence). The commemorative calendar included in this section lists many of these observances, as well as contact information for the primary sponsor of each event. Use this calendar to help plan your events and find partners for National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

OVC Events Calendar. Visit <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ovccalendar> to view the National Calendar of Crime Victim Assistance-Related Events, coordinated by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. This constantly updated, comprehensive calendar lists national, state, and local events on victim-related topics with links to more details about each event. Use the calendar throughout the year, particularly as you plan your NCVRW observance, to check events of interest to your organization.

You can also add your own local observances to the calendar.

VOCA Voices

Victims of crime—more than anyone—know the impact of victimization and the challenges victims face. Victims can eloquently describe how they felt and what they needed after crime invaded their lives. This section includes quotations from victims about the effects of crime, the dilemmas they faced, and the power of VOCA programs to help them rebuild their lives. It also features statements from victim advocates and elected officials about the significance and impact of the historic law.

Sample Proclamation

Proclamations from public officials—the President of the United States, senators, mayors, and governors—focus public attention and lend authority to National Crime Victims' Rights Week. NCVRW ceremonies often begin with proclamations describing the impact of crime on the nation, the reasons for observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week, and the significance of the year's theme. Officials often invite sponsoring agencies and local media to attend public signings of these proclamations. To request proclamations for your NCVRW observance, contact your government officials' offices **at least one month in advance**, and plan to use those proclamations in your promotional literature and events.

Sample Speech

Even if your NCVRW plans do not include speeches, you'll want to understand the background and inspiration for this year's NCVRW theme. Why should we celebrate VOCA? What difference does it make to victims? How does VOCA rebuild victims' lives? The sample speech included in this section opens a window on VOCA, exploring its history and impact on victims. If you are planning a speech, identify the issues that interest your particular audience, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, terrorism, child sexual abuse, or financial crime. Start with a real or fictionalized victim in your town 30 years ago. Describe what that victim

MAXIMIZING COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

might have faced before VOCA, and then explain how VOCA has changed the landscape for victims of crime. If you're not planning a speech, write a brief "then and now" narrative to use in your other promotional materials. By describing how VOCA works, you can inspire your community to celebrate the Victims of Crime Act during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Extend Your Reach through Partnerships

If you've ever posted a link on a partner organization's Web site or participated in a listserv, you already know the power of partnerships. Partnerships expand the staff, resources, and audience for any campaign. To plan your NCVRW observance, you can work with corporations and businesses, allied professional associations, civic organizations, faith communities, and other interested groups to promote NCVRW events and boost the impact of your campaign. Identify potential partners, determine your mutual interests, contact them immediately, and plan your joint campaign. Once your partnership is underway, you can explore other joint projects to help local crime victims throughout the year.

Ideas for Special Events

Throughout the United States, communities establish traditions for observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week. They may hold opening ceremonies, marches or walks, art or poetry contests, or educational events to observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week. They may display paintings or quilts to commemorate victims and honor those who serve them. Each year since 2006, the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice

Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, has offered Community Awareness Project grants to support new, creative NCVRW public awareness campaigns. Last year, through a cooperative agreement with the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA), OVC competitively selected 54 public agencies, nonprofit programs, community-based victim service

organizations, faith-based organizations, and community coalitions to receive these grants. You can visit NAVAA's Web site (<http://cap.navaa.org>) for ideas on how these communities planned their NCVRW events. Some of these projects appear among the ideas for special events featured in this section of the Resource Guide. 5

Tips for Using the Theme DVD

Enclosed in your 2009 NCVRW Resource Guide is a **Theme DVD** that includes two broadcast-quality videos for your use: a 5-minute "Theme Video" that introduces this year's theme and a 60-second public service announcement (PSA) that you can customize with your organization's contact information. If you plan to ask a local television station to broadcast your PSA, be sure to discuss with the station the guidelines and procedures for airing public service announcements in your area. Also, allow enough time for the local station (or video production company) to add your contact information in the 7-second interval reserved at the end of the 60-second PSA for the "tag" about your organization.

Other ideas for using the theme DVD:

- Use the 5-minute Theme Video to open a news conference on victims' rights.
- Feature the video in your planned activities for National Crime Victims' Rights Week (e.g., to begin a candlelight vigil, panel discussion, or reception at your facility).
- Build your own public awareness event around a special screening of the video.
- Encourage allied professionals to show the video at staff meetings and board retreats.
- Encourage faith-based organizations to use the video in their social justice outreach work.
- Share the video with local media as a catalyst to encourage coverage of events during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. (Let your broadcasting contacts know they are welcome to use clips of the longer video in their features.)

Tips for holding your own screening:

- Choose a location where your audience will be comfortable watching the video. It should be quiet and dark, with seating if possible.
- You will need a DVD player or a computer that plays DVDs, good speakers, and a large monitor or screen to properly show the video at an event. If you do not have your own equipment, you can rent these items from an audiovisual equipment company. You can also choose a location with an in-house system. (Many hotels, schools, libraries, and conference facilities provide this service.)

2009 COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR

The most effective outreach efforts are those that continue beyond a single day, week, or month. Fortunately, as this commemorative calendar shows, opportunities abound throughout the year to educate your community about the impact of crime and the ongoing need to help victims rebuild their lives.

JANUARY

CRIME STOPPERS MONTH

Crime Stoppers International
800-850-7574
www.c-s-i.org

NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

MENTOR
703-224-2200
www.mentoring.org

NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

National Center for Victims of Crime
Stalking Resource Center
202-467-8700
www.ncvc.org/src

FEBRUARY

NATIONAL TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS WEEK

February 2-6, 2009
Texas Advocacy Project
Teen Justice Initiative
512-225-9579
www.texasadvocacyproject.org

MARCH

NATIONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION WEEK

March 23-27, 2009
National Association of Students Against
Violence Everywhere (SAVE) and GuidanceChannel.com
800-999-6884, ext. 3037
www.violencepreventionweek.org

APRIL

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Prevent Child Abuse America
312-663-3520
www.preventchildabuse.org

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

National Sexual Violence Resource Center
717-909-0710, 717-909-0715 (TTY)
www.nsvrc.org

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE DAYS

April 24-26, 2009
Youth Service America
202-296-2992
www.ysa.org

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

April 26-May 2, 2009
U.S. Department of Justice
Office for Victims of Crime
800-851-3420
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ncvrw/welcome.html

MAY

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Administration on Aging
Department of Health and
Human Services
800-877-8339
www.aoa.gov

NATIONAL LAW DAY

May 1, 2009
American Bar Association
800-285-2221
www.abanet.org

NATIONAL CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' WEEK

May 3-9, 2009
American Correctional Association
800-222-5646
www.aca.org

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

May 12-16, 2009
Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc.
573-346-4911
www.nationalcops.org

NATIONAL PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL DAY

May 15, 2009
Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc.
573-346-4911
www.nationalcops.org

NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

May 25, 2009
National Center for Missing
and Exploited Children
800-843-5678
www.missingkids.com

JULY

NATIONAL PROBATION, PAROLE, AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION WEEK

July 19-25, 2009
American Probation and Parole Association
859-244-8203
www.appa-net.org

AUGUST

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

August 4, 2009
National Association of Town Watch
800-NITE-OUT
www.nationaltownwatch.org

SEPTEMBER

NATIONAL CAMPUS SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

Security On Campus, Inc.
888-251-7959
www.securityoncampus.org

NATIONAL YOUTH COURT MONTH

National Association of Youth Courts
410-528-0143
www.youthcourt.net

2009 COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

September 6-12, 2009
American Association of Suicidology
202-237-2280
www.suicidology.org

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR MURDER VICTIMS

September 25, 2009
National Organization of Parents
Of Murdered Children, Inc.
888-818-POMC
www.pomc.org

OCTOBER

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION MONTH

National Crime Prevention Council
202-466-6272
www.ncpc.org

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

National Coalition Against Domestic
Violence
303-839-1852
www.ncadv.org

NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK

October 4 - 10, 2009
PACER Center, National Coalition for
Parent Involvement in Education,
National Education Association, and
National PTA
952-838-9000, 952-838-0190 (TTY)
www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

October 14-20, 2009
YWCA of the USA
202-467-0801
www.ywcaweekwithoutviolence.org

AMERICA'S SAFE SCHOOLS WEEK

October 18-24, 2009
National School Safety Center
805-373-9977
www.nssc1.org

NOVEMBER

TIE ONE ON FOR SAFETY

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
800-GET-MADD
www.madd.org

DECEMBER

NATIONAL DRUNK AND DRUGGED DRIVING PREVENTION MONTH

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
800-GET-MADD
www.madd.org

25

This year, National Crime Victims' Rights Week honors the 25th anniversary of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the establishment of the Crime Victims Fund. The following quotations were gathered from crime victims who found support and assistance at VOCA-funded agencies and from victim advocates, allied professionals, and lawmakers who have witnessed the profound impact of VOCA on the provision of victim services. Feel free to quote these testimonials in your speeches, interviews, and written materials during National Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year. You may also wish to collect quotations yourself from victims you serve or from others in your community who support and applaud the Victims of Crime Act.

Before VOCA

"Our concern for crime victims rests on far more than simple recognition that it could happen to any of us. It's also rooted in the realization that ... all of us have an interest in seeing that justice is done not only to the criminal, but for those who suffer the consequences of his crime. In creating this task force ... I am convinced both that we should and that we can achieve more than has been accomplished in the past."

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN
APRIL 23, 1982

In establishing the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, whose recommendations led to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

"Before VOCA, victims and survivors were on their own, needing to scrape together money for medical care or funeral costs. Before VOCA, service providers had to rely on spaghetti dinner fundraisers or bake sales, and the fiscal kindness of friends to survive."

SHARON ENGLISH, DIRECTOR (RETIRED)
California Youth Authority Office of Victim and Survivor Services

"Before VOCA, taking a job at a victim services program often meant forgoing medical benefits, retirement funds, and higher-paying positions. Many victim services staff members had to depend on food stamps and other government assistance to feed and house their families in order to continue their work with victims."

CAROL L. LAVERY, VICTIM ADVOCATE
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

"Prior to the '70s, there wasn't anyone who was specifically there for the needs of the victim. Victims were falling through the cracks. They had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and muddle along without anyone paying attention to what their needs were."

VICKI SHARP
Pima County Attorney's Victim Witness Program

"My world fell apart when our precious daughter was killed by a drunk driver. At the time, the availability of skilled victim advocates was sparse. Today that has changed. Thanks to VOCA-funded trainings, thousands of outstanding, well-trained victim advocates are working in every field of victimization. Without this resource, we would be in the dark ages again, with victims desperately struggling on their own."

JAN WITHERS, NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER
*Chairperson, Victim Services Committee
Mothers Against Drunk Driving*

"The 1984 VOCA legislation was born out of the firsthand experiences of crime victims. Prior to the enactment of VOCA, victims were often left alone, with little or no financial assistance. VOCA proved then to be a critical lifeline for victims as well as to victim/witness assistance programs in the federal, state, and local systems."

DAN LEVEY, NATIONAL PRESIDENT
National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children, Inc.

"Just as our daughter's brutal murder 26 years ago divided our lives into 'before' and 'after,' so too has VOCA transformed victim services from 'then' to 'now.' The catalyst for the nonprofit organization we founded in 1982 in Stephanie's memory was the complete absence of community support, criminal justice assistance, or counseling for families of homicide victims. Today, VOCA enables victims and survivors to receive the professional services they need and deserve."

ROBERTA ROPER, FOUNDER
*Stephanie Roper Committee & Foundation, Inc.
Board Chair, Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.*

VOCA VOICES

After VOCA

“As a victim of identity theft, I’m pleased to see victims of financial crime being served by passionate and innovative programs all across the country. Although identity theft and financial fraud are relatively new crimes, VOCA services and assistance have been essential to victims’ recovery.”

JAIMEE NAPP, IDENTITY THEFT VICTIM, FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Identity Theft Action Council of Nebraska

“When victims receive the proper services, the ripple effect is tremendous. Those services reach far beyond the primary victims to everyone who touches their lives.”

DEBBIE SMITH
Sexual assault victim/Legislative advocate

“Being at The Bridge translates to being safe. The staff is wonderful. We came with our clothes and nothing else. Each day here I feel stronger and know I am important and that I am changing. I am very thankful to The Bridge for all the help they have given my daughter and me.”

Victim letter to VOCA-funded services agency

“Thank you for everything you have done for me. You have given me so much hope for the future by helping me grow and become a better person. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.”

Victim letter to VOCA-funded services agency

“Special people touch lives. You can count on them to be there to help, to listen or lend you a hand. You can tell it’s all done with a true heart. It’s your heart that makes doing your job so special. Thank you so much for being there and helping me in every way when I needed you.”

Victim letter to VOCA-funded services agency

“The many branches of today’s crime victim assistance field can trace their roots to the Victims of Crime Act. VOCA funding and the collaboration it promotes have had a profound, positive impact on direct services to crime victims and survivors, the implementation of victims’ rights, and the overall growth of our field.”

ANNE SEYMOUR, SENIOR ADVISOR
Justice Solutions

“Without the money that comes in from the Crime Victims Fund, many victim assistance programs would not be able to exist. It’s helped thousands of people, one individual at a time.”

CHERYL GUIDRY TYSKA, DIRECTOR
Victim-Witness Services, Anne Arundel County State’s Attorney’s Office

“Thank you, VOCA, for 25 years of service to victims of crime. With your support, Mothers Against Drunk Driving has served thousands of victims of drunk driving as they journey through devastating challenges of loss because of this senseless crime.”

GLENDIA RICHARDSON, FORMER CHAIR
MADD Victim Services Committee

“It was 1984, and President Reagan just signed into law a simple concept—use fines and penalties collected from federal defendants to fund services for crime victims. VOCA was the watershed event in direct services to victims—a pipeline of financial support that has enriched and sustained the landscape of victim services.”

JAY HOWELL, VICTIMS’ RIGHTS ATTORNEY
Former Executive Director of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

“If I could focus on any one thing that has had the most major impact during my tenure in this field, it would be VOCA, without a doubt. It was a godsend because it was the first funding that provided money to just do direct services regardless of what type of crime victim it was.”

JEANNETTE M. ADKINS, ADMINISTRATOR
Greene County Prosecutor’s Office

“It helps victims to know that most of the funding for state victim compensation programs comes from offenders, which means that the person who has done a criminal act against them is required to pay back, to make amends for that offense.”

DAN EDDY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards

“When I surveyed the states [about VOCA], the common response was ‘we would not have anything if it was not for VOCA.’ It was not only the financial resources it provided, it was the formal recognition of the importance of victim services.”

STEVE DERENE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators

“VOCA created not only a new, stable infrastructure for victim service programs, but it also became a powerful force to reform compensation programs—to make them more generous in payments to victims, make the application process easier, and improve outreach to victims. The success of VOCA with its unique funding scheme is admired and envied by our counterparts across the globe.”

JOHN STEIN, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
International Organization for Victim Assistance
(former Public Affairs Director, National Organization for Victim Assistance)

“I was honored to support the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, which established the Crime Victims Fund. VOCA-funded victim assistance programs serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year. The programs have transformed and modernized the services that states are able to provide crime victims. I will continue to work to ensure the long-term stability of the VOCA Fund.”

U.S. SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY (D-VT)
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee

“For more than two decades, VOCA has been providing critical funding to victims’ service organizations and direct compensation to victims of crime. These grants come from a fund that is financed by those who commit crimes, not taxpayer dollars. I will continue to lead efforts to make the vast majority of what is taken into the Fund every year available for grants the following year, as was intended in the original law enacted in the late 1980s.”

U.S. SENATOR MIKE CRAPO (R-ID)

“Over the last 25 years, VOCA has been one of the most important federal programs to assist crime victims, who very well could be our own mother, father, sibling, best friend, or neighbor. Every hour of every day crimes occur, and victims need to know that they have supportive organizations to help them through a rough time. There are approximately 4,400 agencies that depend on VOCA funding, serving nearly 4 million victims each year. I want to join our nation in celebrating the 25th anniversary of VOCA, and pledge that I will continue to ensure this vital fund is protected.”

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JIM COSTA (D-CA)
Co-Chair, Congressional Victims’ Rights Caucus

“As a former judge, I witnessed firsthand the dire need for crime victims to have services and guidance to help them navigate the criminal justice system and to understand their rights under law. Twenty five years later, I am pleased with the progress that has resulted from the passage of VOCA and all that VOCA-funded agencies across the country do to assist and support crime victims. On the silver anniversary of VOCA, I am proud to continue my commitment to ensuring the integrity and intent of VOCA.”

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JUDGE TED POE (R-TX)
Founder and Co-Chair, U.S. Congressional Victim’s Rights Caucus



SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 26 – May 2, 2009

- Whereas, more than 33 million Americans are victims of crime each year;
- Whereas, victims may suffer emotional, physical, psychological, and financial harm as a result of crime;
- Whereas, victim assistance and compensation programs across the country provide vital and supportive services for victims that help individuals, families, and communities cope with the impact of crime;
- Whereas, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), passed by Congress in 1984, affirmed a national commitment to helping victims rebuild their lives by establishing the Crime Victims Fund, a major source of funding for services and compensation to victims of crime throughout the United States;
- Whereas, the Fund comprises fines and penalties levied on offenders and affirms the principle that those who commit crimes should be held accountable for their actions;
- Whereas, the Crime Victims Fund provides support to states for victim assistance and victim compensation programs, as well as support for federal victims of crime, child abuse prosecution, emergency reserve to assist victims of terrorism, and training and technical assistance for the victim services field;
- Whereas, the Crime Victims Fund supports more than 4,400 state and local victim assistance programs, including rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, victim assistants in law enforcement and prosecutor offices, and other direct service providers that help millions of victims every year;
- Whereas, victim compensation programs pay for medical and counseling costs, funeral bills, crime-scene cleanup, and lost wages for victims of crime;
- Whereas, National Crime Victims' Rights Week—April 26 – May 2, 2009—provides an opportunity for our country to recognize the Victims of Crime Act as a major bedrock of support for victim services and to reaffirm our nation's commitment to addressing the needs of victims of crime; and
- Whereas, (Your Organization) is joining forces with victim service programs, criminal justice officials, and concerned citizens throughout (Your City/County/Parish/State/Tribe) and America to observe the 25th anniversary of VOCA during National Crime Victims' Rights Week;

Now, therefore, I, _____, as (Governor/County Executive/Mayor/etc.) of _____, do hereby proclaim the week of April 26 – May 2, 2009, as

(Your City/County/Parish/State/Tribe) Crime Victims' Rights Week

And reaffirm the commitment of (City/County/Parish/State/Tribe) to helping victims of crime rebuild their lives through supportive services and victim compensation during National Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year.

_____ (signature)

_____ (date)

Then and Now: How VOCA Serves Victims of Crime in America

Thirty years ago, a 50-year-old woman woke up to find an intruder standing over her with a knife at her throat. As she began to scream, the intruder beat her, cut her, and then sexually assaulted her. He rampaged through her house, smashing furniture and windows, ripping out phone wires, and taking her jewelry and other valuables. He told her he would kill her if she ever called the police.

When the attacker left, the victim ran to a neighbor's home, called the police, and was taken to a hospital. An intern seemed annoyed to have to treat her, and a nurse implied the victim "should not have been out alone at this time of night." After the exam, the victim returned home in a taxi, at her own expense, wearing only a hospital gown because the police had seized her clothes as evidence. The hospital later billed her for the forensic exam.

The attacker was arrested but soon began making threatening phone calls to the victim from jail. Without notifying the victim, the judge released the defendant on bail and then refused to have him arrested when he was seen lurking in the street near the victim's home. The court rescheduled proceedings, often without informing the victim, consuming all her leave time and putting her job at risk. No one ever explained the court system to her or asked her how the crime had affected her. No one prepared her for brutal cross examinations that implied she was to blame for the crime. When the offender was finally convicted, his family—but not the victim—was allowed to make a statement at the sentencing. The judge sentenced the rapist to three years.

This victim's plight, which was cited in the report of the 1982 President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, was typical at the time. The Task Force, appointed by President Ronald W. Reagan in 1982, had heard many such stories

from victims throughout the nation. Victims described an "unexplained" and "hellish" criminal justice system that callously ignored their needs.¹ One victim disabled by a crime said he cashed in his life insurance to pay for heat and food. Another said she paid for her own psychological counseling, while the defendant's was covered by the state. Another anguished that the court failed to protect a child victim of sexual abuse. Victims noted that during trials, the state clothed, fed, and housed defendants. Offenders received physical and psychiatric care, job training, education, support for their families, a free lawyer, and counsel on appeal. But victims were on their own. Such treatment, said one victim, made "the criminal and the criminal justice system partners in crime."²

Federal Government Takes Action

The Task Force concluded that "poor treatment of victims was more widespread than [members] had imagined" and that "the criminal justice system regularly revictimizes victims."³ The Task Force recommended new federal legislation to fund state victim compensation programs and local victim assistance programs to improve the treatment and rights of victims. In 1984, Congress passed landmark legislation to ease the burdens faced by victims of crime in the United States.

The new law, called the Victims of Crime Act, established the Crime Victims Fund to support crime victims throughout the United States. The law provided that fines from offenders—not taxes from the Treasury—would supply the resources for the Fund. States would receive money from this Fund to support crime victim compensation and victim assistance programs. Victim compensation programs

¹ Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, "Final Report of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime," (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 9, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/presdntstskforcrprt/voc.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2008).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

SAMPLE SPEECH

pay many out-of-pocket expenses—such as medical care, counseling, funerals, and lost wages—that victims face in the aftermath of crime. Victim assistance programs—such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs—help victims gain physical and emotional stability, and support to navigate the criminal justice system.

Today, the Fund also supports the federal victim notification system and federal victim coordinators in U.S. Attorneys' and FBI offices throughout the nation. VOCA also funds child abuse prosecution, the antiterrorism emergency reserve, and training and technical assistance for victim service providers throughout the United States. In its 25-year history, the Fund has grown from \$68 million to more than \$2 billion and is disbursed in amounts determined by Congress every year.

What VOCA Means to Victims of Crime

So what do these programs mean to victims of crime?

[Suggestion: Use a comparable example from your local community.]

Last year in California, a young woman was sexually assaulted in her apartment at 2:00 a.m. Distraught and sobbing, she called a 24-hour hotline for victims of sexual assault. The kind voice of a trained volunteer answered the call, waited until the victim stopped crying, and asked her if she was in a safe place. The volunteer encouraged the victim to seek medical treatment and to consider reporting the crime. The victim said no one would believe that she had been raped because she had invited the man to her home. The volunteer urged the victim to go to the nearest emergency room, where a counselor and advocate would meet her to help her talk with nurses and the police. The victim agreed to go.

When she reached the hospital, a victim advocate met her in the emergency room, where she was examined by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) trained in collecting forensic evidence and helping victims of sexual

assault. Both the advocate and the nurse examiner assured the victim that she was not at fault for being assaulted and guided her through the forensic exam, paid for by the state. The advocate outlined the questions the police would ask the victim, witnessed her report to the police, and gave her new clothes in place of her own, which the police had taken as evidence. The victim also received a voucher for a taxi ride home, an offer of shelter, and referrals to find a new apartment if she wanted to move.

When the case entered the criminal justice system, the victim advocate outlined the steps the case would follow, alerted the victim about her rights, helped her enroll in the state victim notification system, and accompanied her to court. When the attacker was identified and arrested, the advocate was available to answer questions. When the defendant was released on bail, the victim was notified. After the DNA evidence collected by the nurse examiner helped convince the jury of the defendant's guilt, the advocate helped the victim submit a victim impact statement, which the victim read in court. The victim received compensation to help pay for housing, medical care, psychological counseling, and time lost from work to be present in court. The defendant got 12 years in prison.

Both of the sexual assaults I've described today devastated the victims and disrupted their lives. But the recent victim did not have to face her trauma alone. The sexual assault hotline, SANE, victim advocate, and victim notification system that helped her were all supported by VOCA funds. These services helped the victim negotiate the criminal justice system, exercise her rights, and begin rebuilding her life.

Not all victims receive such assistance, and not all communities have access to the range of services the recent victim received. Yet in 1984, Congress built a foundation and a system of lifelines for victims of crime throughout the United States. In 2009, VOCA gives victims hope and the field much to celebrate. 🍷

EXTEND YOUR REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) has helped meet victims' needs and support their rights. This year, National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) celebrates VOCA's 25 years of rebuilding victims' lives. Communities across the country will explore VOCA's history and honor the pioneers who helped pass this landmark law. Your 2009 NCVRW events can help showcase VOCA's impact on your community.

VOCA-funded agencies form a core alliance for planning your NCVRW events. To begin, you can make a list of local agencies with missions like yours, and contact them to explore joint NCVRW outreach. Then branch out to other organizations that are likely to support your work. Businesses, corporations, and civic organizations, for example, have a stake in fighting crime and helping victims. Public officials, government agencies, and educational institutions seek to reduce the impact of crime. The following list offers ideas on partnerships you might consider to help plan 2009 National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Allied Professionals

Professionals in criminal justice, social services, and health care make strong NCVRW partners. These professionals know the services victims need, and they understand how VOCA helps local victims. Mobilizing contacts and resources from all these fields will strengthen your planning and expand the scope of your NCVRW outreach campaigns.

Law Enforcement Professionals, Prosecutors, and Corrections and Probation Officers

Every day, criminal justice professionals witness the impact of crime on victims. They know that victims need information, effective advocacy, and financial support. Some police departments have materials to educate victims about available resources and spokespeople who promote public safety. As you plan your NCVRW activities, partner with criminal justice professionals to educate the community about VOCA-funded services. Ask prosecutors and corrections officers to speak about VOCA services, such as notification and victim advocacy, that protect victims and support their participation in the criminal justice system.⁴ Include businesses that partner with law enforcement to

enhance public safety. Invite them to help plan your events, support your outreach, and display NCVRW posters in their businesses.

Health Care Professionals

Health care providers often treat victims of violence. Such professionals strongly support programs that help victims recover from crimes. Collaborate with your local medical and dental society, nurses' association, and physical and occupational therapists to educate their members about the range of services available for victims. Invite your local hospitals to host information fairs and professional forums, display outreach posters and banners, and engage their board members in celebrating the Victims of Crime Act during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Mental Health Professionals

Mental health professionals understand that victims, often scarred by crime, may need a wide range of services. Work with your community mental health associations to educate their members about local services available for victims. Inform them about safety planning, victim compensation, and other services that can help their clients. Invite mental health professionals to join community coalitions of counselors, teachers, school admin-

istrators, and parents to prevent crime and help victims. Include these professionals in planning your NCVRW events, and invite them to support your outreach through their professional publications and communications networks.

Businesses and Corporations

Businesses have a strong interest in public safety and crime prevention, and they support programs that enhance the well-being of their communities. Look for partners by researching the businesses and associations that support the local police department. Invite some of them to help plan your local NCVRW events. Encourage them to offer resources, planning tools, advertising and marketing skills, and to display posters, banners, and other NCVRW outreach materials.

Chambers of Commerce

Contact your local chamber of commerce, and ask for a brief meeting with officers or a few minutes to address their members at an event. Tell them why 2009 National Crime Victims' Rights Week will celebrate the Victims of Crime Act, and inform them about VOCA-funded services in your

⁴Victims have the right to be notified about important developments in their cases, such as the arrest, arraignment, escape, or release of the offender; court proceedings; parole hearings; and sentencing. VOCA supports the notification systems used in the federal court system and helps fund victim advocates who inform victims about both their rights and the notification systems that alert them about developments in their cases.

EXTEND YOUR REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

community. Ask for members' help in planning NCVRW messages and community outreach. If your community holds an NCVRW ceremony, honor the Chamber of Commerce leaders and members who supported your local events.

Visitors' and Convention Bureaus

Visitors' and convention bureaus strongly support public safety. Contact these agencies, explain the purpose of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, and describe the VOCA-funded victim services in your community. Invite local visitors' bureaus to distribute public education materials for victims, such as palm cards with crime prevention and victim assistance tips, and give them a list of resources, such as the National Center for Victims of Crime's National Crime Victim Helpline (1-800-FYI-CALL) and Web site, www.ncvc.org, or the Office for Victims of Crime Web site, www.ovc.gov, that help travelers protect themselves and find help during or after an emergency. Invite these agencies to join your NCVRW planning committee, and recognize their contributions in your outreach materials and at your events.

Civic Organizations

Millions of Americans belong to civic organizations that support their communities. NCVRW planners can work with parent-teacher organizations, Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, professional retirees' groups, city and county advisory commissions, neighborhood watch groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, and other community organizations to plan and host events, distribute materials, and encourage their members to volunteer their services at NCVRW events. Groups representing underserved

communities (e.g., ethnic minorities, victims with disabilities) in particular, may need information about VOCA-funded services. Contact these groups, inform them about VOCA programs, and ask if they can provide volunteers, translators (if appropriate), and guidance on how to involve their communities in National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Community Development Agencies

Community development agencies have links to local businesses and community organizations, city and county planners, builders, retailers, community neighborhood associations and ethnic groups, banks, media, health care organizations, and government agencies. Contact your community development agency director or meet with agency staff and ask them to suggest potential partners for National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Faith Communities

Faith communities make great NCVRW partners because they have strong commitments to their members and their communities. Make a list of local faith communities and invite them to help plan your NCVRW activities. Explain why National Crime Victims' Rights Week will celebrate VOCA and describe how VOCA programs can help their members. Ask them to publicize NCVRW events and VOCA program services through their communications networks, especially if they have bilingual staff or their own newsletters. Ask for their suggestions and honor their contributions to National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Public Agencies

Libraries, regional centers, agencies for youth and seniors, commissions for women, and ethnic community liaison agencies can help promote National Crime Victims' Rights Week and educate the public about VOCA programs and services. Invite the following local agencies to serve as NCVRW partners:

Libraries: Public libraries can display posters and brochures, offer information on VOCA programs, host forums and exhibits, and offer meeting space to plan local NCVRW events.

Minority Liaison Offices: Many cities, counties, and states have minority liaison offices for various ethnic communities. These offices work with political leaders and civic organizations within these communities and they understand the impact of crime on specific populations. Such offices can help alert their communities about VOCA programs that could help many of their members, who may not understand their rights or the services that are available to them. Invite minority liaison officials to help plan your NCVRW outreach and events.

Senior Agencies: Senior centers, adult protective services, area agencies on aging, and consumer protection agencies in your city, county, or state might collaborate on outreach to seniors on VOCA-funded services (such as victim advocacy and compensation) that can help them if they are victimized by elder abuse, financial fraud, robbery, or other crimes.

EXTEND YOUR REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Public Officials

Public officials lend authority, prestige, and support to NCVRW observances. Contact the offices of your mayor, city council members, or state and federal legislators. Ask for their advice, endorsement, and support. Point out how VOCA-funded programs help your community, and invite your local officials to speak or serve as masters of ceremony at NCVRW events. Publicly honor their contributions, and be sure to thank them for their support.

Schools

By working with schools, you can reach children, parents, teachers, administrators, and entire neighborhoods. Schools can teach students how the Victims of Crime Act helps their communities. They can hold art, banner, poster, and essay contests and exhibitions to celebrate the Victims of Crime Act and National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Middle school and high school students can launch their own outreach campaigns—using school art and drama departments and

communications studios—to publicize the week. Schools can host assemblies, films, debates, forums, and plays on issues selected by students, and schools may offer community service credits to students who help plan and present NCVRW events. 📣



25

IDEAS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Throughout the nation, communities plan ingenious, creative observances for National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW). They develop their own traditions to honor victims and convey the challenges they face. Communities may hold ceremonies or educational events, issue proclamations and press statements, conduct marches or walks, hold art and poetry contests, or display quilts and other artistic works to portray the impact of victimization. Every year, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), in collaboration with the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, competitively selects jurisdictions throughout the United States to receive partial funding for public awareness events and activities during National Crime Victims' Rights Week through its NCVRW Community Awareness Project initiative. OVC bases these awards on proposed collaboration, innovation, community impact, media involvement, and experience with victims' issues. As you plan your 2009 NCVRW activities, you can choose any of the following event ideas or use them to inspire your own celebration of the Victims of Crime Act.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Special Events

Art Exhibits

Butterfly Release

Candlelight Vigils/Observances

Clothesline Projects

Commemorative Displays

- *Balloon Release*
- *Commemorative Quilts*
- *Empty Seat at the Table*
- *Empty Shoes Display*
- *Memorial Walls*
- *Memorial Walkways*
- *Silhouette Displays*

Dramatic Presentations

Educational Forums

Flag Display

Funeral Procession

Grocery Store Campaigns

Information Expos/Fairs

Initiative Announcements

Kite Festivals

Media Outreach

Rallies

Sports Tournaments

Theater Infomercials

Tree and Flower Plantings

Walk/Run for Victims' Rights

Youth Events

- *Art, Poetry, and Essay Contests*
- *Kids Are Our Business Breakfast*
- *Kisses for Cops Campaign*
- *Rethink-Rediscover-Remember*
- *Safety for Kids Activities*
- *Toys Against Violence*

IDEAS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Art Exhibits

Art can powerfully convey victims' experiences and the human costs of crime. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, community centers, libraries, and government centers can host exhibits of paintings, sculptures, murals, or other works by local artists, students, advocates, or victims to reflect this year's theme. Last year in Boston, Massachusetts, the state Office of Victim Assistance hosted the second annual "Violence Transformed" exhibit of visual and performing arts in the State House to express the horror of violence, commemorate victims, foster healing, and imagine alternatives. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, the University of Minnesota held its fifth "Art of Recovery" exhibit of paintings about violence by victims of crime to convey victims' pain and urge the community to take responsibility to end violence. The Harbor House Domestic Violence Program in Appleton, Wisconsin, commissioned artwork by a college student to be displayed in the Justice Center and Courthouse to inspire crime victims, and the Wayne County Children's Advocacy Center, Inc., in Wooster, Ohio, unveiled a mural by a local artist and abuse survivor, with the theme "Justice for All."

Butterfly Release

According to some American Indian legends and traditions, wishes whispered to a butterfly will take to the heavens and be granted. In Oklahoma, Head Start children released butterflies with the wish, "Justice for Victims...Justice for All." The butterfly releases, held in two counties (LeFlore and Latimer), were sponsored by San Bois CASA, Inc.

Candlelight Vigils/ Observances

The symbolism of many candles lighting the darkness captures the spirit of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The U.S. Department of Justice and many communities throughout the nation launch their NCVRW observances with candlelight ceremonies to remember, honor, and support victims of crime. You can invite local officials, artists, choirs, victims, advocates, service groups, and the public to join the ceremony. Also invite the media to cover the event, and send photos to your community newspapers and organization newsletters.

Clothesline Projects

The original Clothesline Project, launched in the 1990s, sought to break the silence, educate the public, and bear witness to the tragedy of domestic violence. The idea was that each victim would paint a T-shirt to tell his or her own story, hang the T-shirt on a clothesline, and then begin—with the support of others—to move beyond the pain he or she experienced. NCVRW observances often include clothesline projects to mobilize communities against violence. Last year, the Bronx District Attorney's Office in New York City; the Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office in Detroit, Michigan; and the Durham, North Carolina, Police Department were among the agencies that presented clothesline displays during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Commemorative Displays

Commemorative quilts, memorial walls, and other powerful displays evoke the pain, loss, and emptiness caused by crime. The rich variety of these visual tributes increases every year.

Balloon Release

At the McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Complex Unit II in Mart, Texas, incarcerated youth released balloons representing the victims they had harmed. The balloon release, part of a two-day NCVRW observance that included presentations from victims, aimed to improve the young offenders' future choices. The Urban League of Columbus, Ohio, and the DeKalb County, Georgia, Task Force on Domestic Violence kicked off National Crime Victims' Rights Week with a balloon release honoring victims of crime. In Columbus, Ohio, in 2007, Parents Of Murdered Children released nearly 300 balloons with the names of local homicide victims, as well as 32 orange and maroon balloons to remember the victims of the Virginia Tech murders.

Commemorative Quilts

Throughout our nation's history, Americans have designed intricate, vibrant quilts to tell their own stories, commemorate the settlement of the West, and brighten their homes. Churches, civic organizations, and communities still sew quilts to celebrate important local leaders and events. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, some cities display completed quilts, and others add new squares to existing quilts to honor recent victims of crime. Communities may invite local businesses to donate supplies and recruit students and civic organizations to contribute new squares. Commemorative quilts make great exhibits not

IDEAS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

only during National Crime Victims' Rights Week but also at local organizations throughout the year. The Fresno County Probation, James Roland Crime Victim Assistance Center in Fresno, California, holds an annual Crime Victims' Memorial Quilt Unveiling. Quilts displayed at the Washoe County District Attorney's Office event, "A Night to Remember" in Reno, Nevada, included the Crime Victims' Memorial Quilt and the Domestic Violence Quilt. The Cherokee Judicial Circuit Court in Georgia also displayed its Crime Victims Awareness Quilt at various sites during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Empty Seat at the Table

An "Empty Seat at the Table" display (in which at least one place setting represents a victim whose life and hopes were destroyed by crime) and other memorial exhibits paid tribute to homicide victims at the Kansas Governor's annual Crime Victims' Rights Conference in Topeka. A similar display was featured at the candlelight vigil in Alachua, Florida, as a poignant reminder of the impact of violence on families and the community.

Empty Shoes Display

In Reading, Pennsylvania, a "Walk a Day in Our Shoes" display featured the empty shoes of victims of all walks of life, arranged on rocks representing the stumbling blocks victims encounter on their road to justice. In Alameda, California, 1,779 pairs of shoes in the "Soles of Survivors" display each represented an open sexual assault case, and the 1,234 empty shoes displayed in Collin County, Texas, represented the number of victims who walked through the county justice system that year.

Memorial Walls

The Binghamton, New York, Homicide Memorial Wall—the site of an NCVRW press conference featuring the mayor, a district attorney, and a representative of the state attorney general's office—was on exhibit to commemorate murder victims during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Crisp County, Georgia, held its candlelight vigil at the county's Victims' Memorial Wall.

Memorial Walkways

Each year in Albany, New York, new bricks bearing the name of recent victims are added to the walkway at the New York State Crime Victims' Memorial in the Empire State Plaza, which honors all victims of crime in New York State. At the annual Memorial Brick Dedication Ceremony, held during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the names on each new brick are read out loud as the state pays tribute to crime victims and the advocates who serve them.

Silhouette Displays

Silhouettes representing victims bear silent witness to lives changed by crime. The Government Center in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, displayed 1,569 silhouettes labeled with the crime committed against each victim. The San Bernardino, California, display, featured on Los Angeles television, remembered local victims of crime. At the display in Florence, Arizona, each silhouette represented a different NCVRW event planned by local law enforcement and social service agencies.

Dramatic Presentations

NCVRW observances in Macon, Georgia, included a production of "Restoring My Joy," a play by Teresa Harris, the mother of domestic violence and murder victim Crystal Harris. Mrs. Harris played herself in the staged production. The Very Special Arts/The Awareness Theater Company of Waterbury, Vermont—in conjunction with local organizations statewide—presented a series of performances of "And Justice for All," a play about victimization and the help available to crime victims.

Educational Forums

Victim service organizations often hold forums and conferences during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The Governor of Kansas conducted the state's annual crime Victims' Rights Conference in Topeka, and the Attorney General of Guam held a three-day training conference on victims' rights and services in Hagatna. The Baltimore, Maryland, Police Department and several community organizations presented a "Justice for Victims Crime Seminar" at the Community College of Baltimore City; the Oklahoma Department of Corrections held a "Justice for Victims. Justice for All." conference and training on victims' rights and related issues; and Catholic Charities of Dallas, Texas, presented a seminar to help immigrant victims of crime understand their legal rights.

IDEAS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Flag Display

In Tucson, Arizona, NCVRW opening ceremonies included the raising of a flag specially designed for National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Funeral Procession

The concluding ceremonies for National Crime Victims' Rights Week in Houston, Texas, included a "funeral procession" of 14 hearses, sponsored by Houston Funeral Directors and Morticians' Association, to highlight teen homicides in some Houston neighborhoods.

Grocery Store Campaigns

Grocery bags offer a great vehicle to reach a broad audience that regularly shops for groceries. NCVRW planners may use ads (often in several languages) on grocery bags and inserts, as well as in store windows and on grocery carts, to alert many different communities about NCVRW messages and activities. Grocery stores in several Arkansas communities distributed inserts about sexual offenders (provided by the Crisis Center for Women) in their grocery bags for one week in April.

Information Expos/Fairs

Information "expos" and fairs offer both fun and useful information about victimization. The Victims' Rights Street Fair in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, included children's activities, a poster logo contest, self-defense demonstrations, information booths, a Silent Witness Display, and other events. The Third Judicial District Attorney's Office of Las Cruces, New Mexico, hosted a booth at the El Paso District Attorney's Victims' Rights Fair, distributing information on immigrant and border victims of crime, followed by three-day informational forums in three cities, on victims' rights, gang violence, methamphetamine abuse, and other issues. In Columbus, Ohio, the Urban League's sexual assault awareness fair focused on preventing family violence and teen dating violence, and in Detroit, Michigan, the Children's Center of Wayne County presented "Justice for Victims. Justice for All: Letting You Know We Care," offering information about the wide range of rights and services available to residents who have been victimized by crime.

Initiative Announcements

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a great time to unveil new programs that serve victims. In 2008, Berks County, Pennsylvania, unveiled its new victim notification system, and the state of Missouri promoted its new "Safe at Home" address protection program. Phoenix, Arizona, announced a new interagency sweep to arrest fugitives, and the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit in Chattanooga, Tennessee, showcased its new victims' resource centers in courthouses throughout the circuit.

Kite Festivals

SAFE House in Albuquerque, New Mexico, held a "Soar above Violence" kite festival and victim tribute with free kites, windsocks, and wind chimes; food, music, and dance performances; community service information booths; and a contest to choose the best NCVRW-themed kite or windsock. Organizers distributed materials for children to make wind chimes and pinwheels. The event ended with a release of balloons bearing messages of hope and tribute to victims.

Media Outreach

NCVRW media campaigns take many forms. Jefferson, Wisconsin, launched its "I Don't Use Violence...I'm Better Than That" campaign, using billboards; posters; victims' rights tip cards; and newspaper, television, and radio public service announcements. The "Shine a Light on Crime" public awareness campaign in Pullman, Washington—which asked the whole community to turn on its lights at the same time to raise awareness about crime—included television, radio, and newspaper ads, as well as widely distributed flyers, buttons, and bookmarks. Oregon's statewide public awareness campaign, "Victims Have Rights, and Offenders Will Be Prosecuted," included a press conference; posters; print, radio, and television ads; and month-long billboard displays throughout the state. The campaign in Reno, Nevada, used ads on city buses, tip cards, bookmarks, and milk cartons that highlighted NCVRW information and Web site addresses, and the District of Columbia featured ads on metro buses and radio and a display at City Hall.

IDEAS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Rallies

NCVRW observances often include rallies to honor and support victims of crime. A rally at the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort, Kentucky, hosted by the attorney general, honored victims and promoted organ donation. Every year in Houston, the families of murder victims share memories and raise awareness about the impact of crime. “Take Back the Night” rallies—such as those in Lowell, Massachusetts, and State College, Pennsylvania—mobilize public sentiment for victims and against crime.

Sports Tournaments

Flint, Michigan, held a “Hoops for Justice” NCVRW basketball tournament, and several organizations—such as Crime Survivors of Irvine, California—held golf tournaments to raise funds for their work with victims.

Theater Infomercials

Local theaters may help promote National Crime Victims’ Rights Week by airing “infomercials” featuring NCVRW messages. For 10 weeks, Kenai, Alaska, theaters played infomercials (three slides with a brief audiotaped narrative) advertising local victims’ services and distributed NCVRW brochures and informational bookmarks to patrons. In Utica, New York, the YMCA of the Mohawk Valley developed a 15-second crime victims’ awareness infomercial for local movie theaters to show during intermission, and the Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc., of Salamanca, New York,

and the Seneca Nation of Indians and their partners promoted National Crime Victims’ Rights Week with a 2-minute movie trailer on the effects of crime.

Tree and Flower Plantings

Tree- and flower-planting ceremonies honor victims and suggest renewed life for victims and communities. Each year in Oswego County, New York, a different community is chosen to host a tree-planting ceremony in honor of victims of crime. In 2008, Reno, Nevada; Mansfield, Ohio; and Anchorage, Alaska, held tree or flower plantings to commemorate and honor victims. At the Gainesville, Texas, State School, incarcerated youth tied red ribbons to many of the trees on campus to recognize and remember the victims of their crimes. As the week progressed, yellow ribbons—symbolizing the youths’ acknowledgements of the hurt they caused their victims—began to appear on the trees. The week’s events culminated in a tree-planting ceremony in honor of victims, which included presentations by several youth.

Walk or Run for National Crime Victims’ Rights Week

Opening and closing NCVRW ceremonies often include a 5K walk/run for justice. Among the communities holding such events were Ft. Wayne and Richmond, Indiana; Galveston, Texas; Los Angeles and Yreka, California; Kansas City, Missouri; Knoxville, Tennessee; Jackson, Mississippi; and Shreveport, Louisiana.

Youth Events

Art, Poetry, and Essay Contests

By involving schools, parents, and students, NCVRW contests inform entire communities about what it means to be a victim of crime. Brockton, Massachusetts, held an “Art of Justice” poster contest for art students in three county high schools, sponsored by VETO, a coalition against domestic violence and sexual assault. Both Meridian, Mississippi, and Sarasota, Florida, held art contests for elementary school students to build students’ awareness about victimization. Allegan County, Michigan, held an essay contest for local youth on how crime affects teens, sponsored by the Allegan County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and local businesses, and the District Attorney’s Office of Queens County, New York, sponsored a poetry contest for youth on stopping violence at home and school.

Kids Are Our Business Breakfast

The Rape and Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo-Moorhead, North Dakota, in partnership with the area Child Advocacy Center, produced and aired a series of three radio commercials promoting the theme “Justice for Victims. Justice for All.” The commercials ran for three weeks, from April 1 to April 18, ending just before the Annual “Kids Are Our Business Breakfast,” an event that promotes the National Crime Victims’ Rights theme and usually draws 500 people.

Kisses for Cops Campaign

The YMCA of Richmond, Indiana, held a “Kisses for Cops Campaign,” which includes a contest to see which classrooms can bring in the most Hershey kisses. Kids write thank you cards to various criminal justice professionals as part of the program’s “Children’s Card Campaign.”



25
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Rebuilding
Lives

Celebrating the
Victims of Crime Act

25