

## Calendar of Events for Victims' Rights Week

### MONTPELIER

**Honor Survivors Day**  
Wed., April 25, 2:30 pm  
Vermont State house.

### STATE CAPITOL LAWN

**The Red Flag Ceremony**  
Wednesday, April 25, Noon  
Sponsored by the Center for Crime Victim Services and the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

### BARRE:

**"Impact of Trauma"**  
Thursday May 3, 2-4 pm  
Barre P&P Office  
255 No. Main Street Barre,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Sherri Burnette, Trauma Coordinator, Vermont Agency of Human Services will be presenting on the "Impact of Trauma on the Lives of Individuals and Families."

### WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, SPRINGFIELD, BRATTLEBORO

Lucky you! Jemima Hathorn, your VSS will be delivering blue and orange homemade goodies to your sites to help you commemorate Victims' Rights Week. You may be wondering what kinds of foods come in blue and orange, but you are in for a wonderful treat.

For more information on any of these events, contact Amy at 241-2302 or Kristin at 241-2338.

## Victims' Rights Week

The theme for 2007 National Crime Victims' Rights Week is "**Victims' Rights: Every Victim. Every Time,**" which recognizes that *each and every victim of crime* deserves support and services to help cope with the aftermath of criminal victimization.

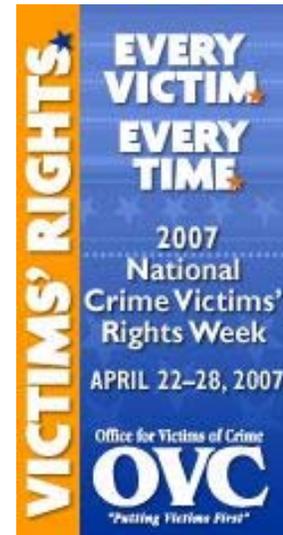
According to John W. Gillis, Director of OVC, the Community Awareness Project helps generate widespread public awareness of crime victims' rights and needs, and the importance of engaging *all* Americans in victim assistance efforts.

Victims Rights' Week is being recognized throughout the Department of Corrections with a series of events hosted by the

Victim Services Program.

We hope that you will take the time to remember victims of crime by wearing a blue and orange ribbon (available through your VSS or through the Victim Services Program Offices in Central Office) and by attending at least one of the many events scheduled for the week.

Although every week should be Victims' Rights Week at the Department of Corrections, this is an opportunity for us to get together to pay special attention. We recognize those who have been harmed by crime, honor their strength and commit ourselves anew as Department of Corrections



employees to being the most compassionate advocates we can be.

## Greetings from the Victim Service Director

I have now been the Director of Victim Services here at the Department of Corrections for just over two years. In that time, I have learned a tremendous amount about this Department and the people who work in it.

I am honored to be able to work with such dedicated and interesting individuals for whom I have tremendous respect.

Corrections is difficult work, and while we don't always agree, I realize that for the most part we have the same goals. We are all working to make our State a safe and productive place for all of its citizens.

That being said, I have spent much of my time here being challenged on all fronts; from within the Department itself to explain why we should be committing resources to serve victims in the first place when we are an "offender focused" department, from outside the Department by our victim service partners in the community, who want to know why we aren't doing more for victims, and by victims themselves who frequently feel that when we do our job it makes them feel that we care more about the offender than we do about the person they harmed.

I have been giving all of this a great deal of thought lately as Victim's Rights Week approaches. I would like to think that every week is victims' rights week here in the Vermont Department of Corrections.

I would like to think that we don't need a National Organization to send us posters and packets of "catchy" phrases and gimmicks to help us make our co-workers aware of the statutory and moral obligation we have to make sure that those hurt by crime are heard.

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## Greetings from the Director

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I would like to think that we wouldn't need a once yearly reminder of our obligation to commit ourselves to keeping the victim's voice in every conversation we have about an offender whether the victim is physically present or not.

I would like to think that we would be able to balance both the needs of the victim with the needs of the offender and not be forced to see our work in Corrections as exclusively focused on either victim or offender. I would like to think that we are able to recognize that Corrections is at its core a victim service. We are providing services:

- Whether we are holding an offender in a facility for an extended period of time to keep the victim and community safe from imminent harm.
- When restricting an offender's freedoms as a way to "hold him/her accountable" for committing a crime.
- When we are providing specialized programs for an offender to help him/her address needs

that will lead to a more productive life and prevent another person from being harmed.

So the next time one of you approaches me and says, "I don't do victim services, I work with offenders" I will beg to differ with you. I will differ politely, but I will differ with you nonetheless.

One last thought. We not only provide services to victims on the most fundamental level when we do corrections work, but in return victims provide a service to us.

When you allow yourself to recognize that victims are the inspiration for the hard work you do every day, the next time your answer will be clear.

When you experience a moment of job related frustration and utter despair; when you ask yourself why are you doing this and if what you are doing makes any difference at all, you will know you do it on behalf of your fellow Vermonters who have been harmed by crime.

And yes, it makes an enormous difference.



## Restitution

While it may be difficult to get an under-employed or barely employed offender to pay restitution, it is very important that we make every attempt to do so. It is especially difficult for victims, who have sustained losses due to a crime, like burglary or arson, when the offender does not make restitution and we appear not to be making an effort to have them do so.

Please note that we have a significant number of victims who are expecting to be paid restitution under the old system. (Pre-2004) This means that the victim gets paid when the offender pays into the fund and are not paid up front. Victims who are owed restitution are counting on us at the DOC to keep the offender accountable to them by paying what they owe.

We should be insisting that every offender who owes restitution keeps their obligation to the victim very high on the his/her financial priority list and that no offender should have his/her case closed until restitution is paid.

## Parole Letters

We have developed two new parole letters for your convenience. They are now available on the H drive under statewide templates.

The first is an easy checklist format that you can use for all offender's who are coming up for any kind of parole hearing, including those who are approaching and those who are past their minimums, those who are still incarcerated and those who are already out in the community.

These new letters are in response to feedback we got about the "120 letter" that you should be using for the Ninety (90) day reintegration notifications.

That letter is not suitable for notification

when the offender is past his/her minimum and or having a review/annual/bi-annual hearing. This new letter covers everyone and includes a one page information sheet about the parole board that victims might find helpful.

There is also an additional letter you should use to inform victims of the outcome of the parole hearing. It too is a checklist and should be fairly easy to fill out and send.

**Sending a follow-up letter to inform the victim of the outcome of the hearing is a requirement of the statute.**

I am sure that you have had experiences with victims who want you to put an offender back in jail because they have failed to pay restitution.

This might seem counter-intuitive, since an offender who cannot pay while out in the community certainly can't pay when they are in jail.

For the most part trying to point this out to a victim who is angry, frustrated and just wants the offender punished, might be won't work.

We would suggest that if you are working with a victim who is insisting that the only way they feel validated is to have the offender who owes restitution incarcerated, you should contact the nearest VSS or call either Kristin (241-2338) or Amy (241-2302) and let us help if we can.

## Department of Victim Services Awarded Grant for Victim Notification Database

The Department of Victim Services has been awarded a \$500,000 grant for the creation of a Victim Notification Database.

The department will be working over the next few weeks to get input from staff and will have updates in the next newsletter.

For any feedback or questions, contact Amy Holloway at 241-3202.



## A Place at the Table: A Moving Portrait of Lives

The appearance of a dining room table looks momentarily out of place in the midst of the conference room, the orange and blue ribbons surrounding it like a crime scene.

But what made the table different from a crime scene were the individual place settings. Each setting has a variety of dishes and silverware that echo the tables of many different homes. On Monday, April 30, the Victim Services Program created "Saving a Place at the Table" to honor those in Vermont who have empty places at their table because a loved one has been lost to murder or DUI, who have no table at all because of arson, or who have nothing to put on their table because of a burglary.

Over 50 people came to view what is correctly called a "living" memorial. Besides the cups and plates, each setting has a special place card as well as the victim's story. At one setting; a photograph of a father and his two young girls. At another place setting; the placemat was a bright orange and yellow collage of a couple expressing their feelings as the victims of arson. Small mementos such as a favorite CD, a set of car keys and a tube of lipstick surround another place

setting. Many of the victims were young, leaving many survivors behind such as children and parents.

Amy Holloway, Director of Victim Services, thanked those present for coming to such an important event. Opening remarks were also given by Cynthia LaWare, Agency of Human Services Secretary, and Rob Hofmann, Executive Director of the Department of Corrections. Both mentioned how moved they were by the display and mentioned the need for victims' rights awareness to be a regular occurrence.

The memorial was inspired by a similar memorial in 1993 from the Women's Resource Center Inc of Scranton Pennsylvania to the victims of domestic homicide. The Victim Services Program hopes that this exhibit will serve as a visual reminder of the Department of Correction's commitment to always have a place at our table for the voice of the crime victim.

The Victim Services Program has also decided to name this newsletter as "The Table," reminding us of our constant commitment to always ensure the victim has a place at our table.

Despite all of our progress in supporting victims, we still have much work to do. Only a fraction of crime victims actually participate in the criminal justice system. Victims' rights vary from state to state. Services aren't always available to meet all victims' needs. If we are to serve every victim, every time, all must do their part.

Check in with your elderly friend or neighbor, who may be vulnerable to exploitation or abuse. Only 1 in 14 incidents of elder abuse is ever reported. Be alert to the teens in your life whose behavior may have suddenly changed, who may be experiencing dating violence or abuse at home. Teens are twice as likely as adults to be victimized by violent crime. Great progress for victims can result from many small steps. And by working together, we can help our community support every victim, every time.

*National Center for Victims of Crime, 2007*