

OFFICE OF VICTIM  
SERVICES



VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

# THE BEACON

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES

SPRING 2009

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## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: JENNIE MARSH

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) has grown over the years in direct proportion to the needs of crime victims. As a need is identified, we have done our best to meet it. The OVS began with the basic service of victim notification, and has expanded to provide a network of services that attempt to lessen the impact on crime victims as much as possible. Victim safety has always been our driving focus, and continues to be as Department of Corrections programs and facilities are reduced and/or eliminated due to state budget cuts.

Crime victims do not have control over

the victimization that another person has chosen to perpetrate. In these tough economic times, the services provided by this office become even more critical. As advocates for victims and for the success of offenders, we continue to support the risk-reduction focused system that the Department of Corrections has created. The Office of Victim Services is at the table during budget discussions and will remain focused on crime victims throughout this process. Our office continues to strive to provide the best possible service for victims, regardless of the state of the economy.

## CHAMPION OF JUSTICE AWARD NOMINEE

The nominee for this quarter is...

**TRINA JOHNSON**, Parole Supervisor at the Kansas City Parole Office.

Trina is very deserving of this nomination to be "Champion of Justice". Here are some of the quotes from her nominations.

"All of Trina's efforts create a unified force to promote accountability for offenders and increases safety for concerned parties."

"She shows great dedication as Parole Supervisor in KCK by reviewing the Domestic Violence Policy on an annual basis with her individual unit, always including the Victim Services Liaison for any questions or concerns."

"Trina attended this year's Safe Home Safe Streets conference...while at the conference she volunteered to be a contact

for a domestic violence advocate who had question about resources for offenders".

"Trina demonstrates a willingness to work not only internally with KDOC staff, but also with community service providers for the safety of crime victims while supporting offender success."

This year we will have three additional nominees with the overall winner being announced in the Spring 2010 newsletter. All of our nominees will receive a certificate of appreciation from OVS. The winner will be presented with an award and named "Champion of Justice"!

**Congratulations Trina!** The OVS staff is truly appreciative of all your hard work and dedication to acknowledging victims' concerns while supporting the overall success of offenders.

## Our Mission

Kansas Department of Corrections Office of Victim Services serves as a liaison between victims and department staff, the Kansas Parole Board, and victim service providers. We are committed to providing crime victims the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. We will approach our work from a victim-focused perspective.

## SPRING 2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 26 - May 2, 2009

[www.ovc.gov/ncvrw](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw)

National Correctional Officers and Employees' Week

May 3 - 9, 2009

American Correctional Association

[www.aca.org](http://www.aca.org)

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Prevent Child Abuse America

312-296-3520 Ext. 168

[www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)

National Police Week

May 10 - 16 2009

Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc.

[www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org)

National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

717-909-0710, 717-909-0715 (TTY)

[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

National Peace Officer' Memorial Day

May 15, 2009

Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc.

[www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org)May

National Law Day

May 1, 2009

American Bar Association

312-988-5000

[www.abanet.org](http://www.abanet.org)

National Missing Children's Day

May 25, 2009

National Center for Missing &amp; Exploited Children

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)VICTIMS' BILL OF RIGHTS HIGHLIGHT BY: DOROTHY STUCKY HALLEY, LMSW  
DIRECTOR, VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE SIX

Kansas has many important victim rights listed in KSA 74-7333. The first one listed is one of my favorites, as it sets the stage for all interactions with victims:

**(1) Victims should be treated with courtesy, compassion and with respect for their dignity and privacy and should suffer the minimum of necessary inconvenience from their involvement with the criminal justice system.**

The idea that victims deserve to be treated humanely and with respect may seem so obvious that it is hardly worth mentioning. However, respectful treatment is often compromised in subtle

ways that we hardly notice. There are many demands on agencies and individuals serving victims that have a louder voice than victims. Personally, I can think of times when I've been relieved that a victim cancelled an appointment. I've thought, "Now I can get some work done." It is easy to begin to view meeting with a victim as an interruption to my work, rather than the purpose for it.

Serving victims with respect, courtesy, and compassion requires agencies to strike a sensitive balance between the needs of victims, the needs of staff, and the funds available to meet all the needs. There is an agency that serves

children that I often think of as a good example of attaining this balance. As soon as a new child arrives, the receptionist walks around from behind her desk and genuinely gives the child a warm greeting, expresses a real interest in the child, and tells the child how pleased the staff is that he/she is there. It is only after acknowledging the child that the professional transporting the child is recognized. Also, there is a pleasant room prepared for the arrival of the child in advance.

story continued on page 3

## VICTIMS' BILL OF RIGHTS HIGHLIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

It's as though, through every behavior of every staff member, this child receives the same basic message of intent and purpose: *You are important to us. We are here to give you the support needed at this difficult time, and learn from you how we can be of most help to you.*

I have walked into quite a few facilities for children over the years. It is unfortunate that most do not give children such an experience in spite of the fact that they have some very dedicated staff who work hard.

Here are some questions to examine your own work and that of your agency:

Are calls answered promptly and with genuine compassion? Is the message given one you would want to hear if you were a client in crisis? Are after-hours calls handled in a

way to minimize the need for staff to respond until daytime hours, or do they focus on getting the client to needed services as soon as possible?

Is the reception and waiting area warm and friendly? Are staff genuinely warm and friendly?

Do staff routinely go the extra distance for the victims they serve?

Are client surveys done with the intent of really seeking client feedback, or as a function of grant compliance?

Can you think of ways the results were used to make sure the agency became more responsive to the victims served?

Do staff meetings generally start with a focus on the needs of those being served, or on budgetary or staff needs?

How do victims know the mission of

your agency? How do they have a voice in agency decisions?

If you and all other staff were to independently make a list of what victims could expect from your agency, would the lists be the same? If not, how are victims to know what they can expect?

Last, but not least, is meeting with a victim viewed as an interruption to the work, or purpose for it?

It is our job, as victim service providers, to make sure that victims are getting treated with courtesy, compassion, and respect not just from others in our community, but from ourselves.

## HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| National Children's Alliance<br>(800) 239-9950              | National Council on Aging<br>(800) 424-9046                           | Rape, Abuse, and Incest<br>National Network (RAINN)<br>(800) 656-4673        |
| National Center for Victims of<br>Crime<br>(800) 394-2255   | National Center for Missing &<br>Exploited Children<br>(800) 843-5678 | Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse<br>(800) 638-8736                             |
| National Domestic Violence<br>Hotline<br>(800) 799-7233     | National Sexual Violence<br>Resource Center<br>(877) 739-3895         | National Clearinghouse for<br>Alcohol and Drug Information<br>(800) 729-6686 |
| National Mothers Against Drunk<br>Driving<br>(800) 438-6233 | National Organization for Victim<br>Assistance<br>(800) TRY-NOVA      | Stalking Resource Center<br>(800) FYI-CALL                                   |
| DUI Victim Center of Kansas<br>(800) 873-6957               | Office of Crime Victims Advocacy<br>(800) 822-1067                    | Kansas Crisis Hotline<br>(888) 363-2287                                      |

**A VICTIM'S EXPERIENCE: VICTIM-OFFENDER DIALOGUE BY: VICKI MERCADO & CARLA WOZNIAK, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OVS**

Time travel back with me to October 5, 1996. Life was good and things were pretty normal at our house. Our 18 year old son, Justin, had graduated from high school earlier that year. In four days he would be moving to Arizona. On that Saturday night Justin had finished his last night working at the Pizza Hut. Andrea, our 16 year old daughter was out with her friends, and our youngest son, Jeremy, was home with my husband Johnny and I, watching a movie.

Justin's cousin called to say that Justin had been shot at Boot Hill parking lot. We rushed to Boot Hill but the police would not let us enter the parking lot because it was a crime scene. We were instructed to meet him at the hospital. Justin arrived by ambulance and we watched as the doctors worked with him in the emergency room. He was taken to surgery but was pronounced dead during surgery.

Our whole family was suddenly forced to live through this horrible nightmare. We learned that Justin was standing in Boot Hill Parking lot, talking with friends, when a group of five gang members walked through the parking lot. There was a lot of shouting and one of the gang members pulled out a .22 pistol and began shooting. Justin wasn't even aware of what was going on. He was in the wrong place, at the wrong time. A bullet entered his chest, bounced off a rib and went through his heart. We suppose he would not have been hit had he not leaned over to see what was going on. The gang member who shot him was a 14 year old named Rafael.

Rafael was soon certified as an adult and after six months of court hearings he agreed to a plea bargain and was sentenced to life in prison for first degree murder. But a life sentence in Kansas is only 15 years. He will be eligible for parole in the year 2011.

My grief, anger, hatred, and bitterness were very intense. I hated that boy with every ounce of energy that I had for what he took from Justin and from my family. I spent time thinking about what I

wanted to do to that boy to make him hurt as much as he hurt us. I was even angry with people who thought I should forgive Rafael. How could I forgive him when I hated him so deeply? I was angry with people who thought I should get over it in a few months because it was an accident, and I dwelled on the heartless, judgmental things people said.

I knew some people whose lives were filled with bitterness and I didn't want to be like them. So I began to pray for God to change my heart. I prayed for God to help me to WANT to forgive Rafael so that I could find healing. I even prayed for Rafael because I was convinced that he had no remorse for what he had done. Through the years I continued to pray those prayers and I worked hard on my anger and grief. Slowly I could feel my prayers being answered. In God's timing, life was becoming good again and I experienced many joys, but I knew I was still angry. I sure didn't know that some very hard struggles were about to pounce down on me.

One day I grabbed the mail, and found a letter with Rafael's name on the return address. I sobbed as I read this letter filled with remorse and regret for what he had done and for the pain that he had caused us. Even though I doubted his words, I answered that letter and we began writing back and forth for over a year. With each letter I felt my heart soften and I began believing his words. Strangely, I wanted to see into his eyes.

I talked to people in the justice system and told them about our letters and that I wanted to meet with Rafael. They all said the same thing. "You should never have received those letters. He is not supposed to be able to contact you."

I was referred to the Department of Corrections Office of Victim Services and began the process for Victim/Offender Dialogue Program. They advised me to have a friend or a support person to go through the

process with me. Rafael and I were both interviewed by trained personnel who walked us through the process. A date was set up for me and my friend to tour the prison in which Rafael was held and the following day we were to meet with him. I decided that I would not tell Rafael that I forgive him because I wasn't ready for that and I definitely did not want to touch him.

Those two days finally came. I was very nervous and filled with anxiety, but the next morning I woke up completely calm. At the prison, we went through the screening process and into the conference room. Rafael was already in the room when we arrived and it was obvious that he was very nervous. I began with the series of questions that I had written out and everything went very well.

I wanted him to feel the hurt that he has caused me and my family. I told him what it was like sitting at Justin's funeral, and in a chair beside a hole in the ground, knowing they were going to put my first born down in that hole and that it took everything I had, to stay in that chair. I told him what it was like going to the cemetery every day for weeks and years, sitting on the ground beside a pile of dirt, knowing that my baby was under all of that dirt. I even told him about a cat that we had when I was a kid.

That mother cat accidentally laid on one of her kittens and smothered it. We buried the kitten but the momma cat found where we buried her baby and dug it up, twice. I told Rafael how badly I wanted to dig up my boy and take him home.

Rafael put his face in his hands and began to sob uncontrollably. He asked if he could have a break

story continued on page 6



## LANSING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY BY: JIM COLLINS

The Lansing Correctional Facility (LCF) is the oldest and largest correctional institution in the State of Kansas. Spread over some 2711 acres, construction was started in 1864 and the first inmates were housed here in 1868. We'll commemorate our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2018, so we have a long and noble



tradition of serving the citizens of Kansas.

The institution consists of two main areas. The first is the Central Unit, which is comprised of the 11 acre Maximum Security compound, located within the walled perimeter of the facility. The Max compound is the most prominent feature of the facility, with its large, limestone buildings, walls and guard towers looming over the town of Lansing and is visible from both Highway 7 and Highway 5. The rest of Central Unit is made up of the 46 acre Medium Security Compound, adjacent to the East of the walled perimeter and surrounded by two rings of chain-link fence, topped by rolls of razor-wire. An intricate system of ground sensors and alarms is intertwined throughout the fences. Inmates in the Max and Medium compounds work on-site at a variety of jobs, including both state jobs and private industries located on the prison grounds.

The second area is the 85 acre Minimum compound known as LCF East Unit, which initially housed female offenders. East Unit is located on Highway 5, a mile east of the Central Unit. The compound is made up of five dormitory style living units and is encircled by twin chain-link fences and razor-wire. The inmates living at East Unit work on the compound, on one of several outside work details or at one of several private industries located off-site.

LCF's inmate population is made up of approximately 2400 men, with custody levels ranging from minimum to special management. LCF employs some 1000 staff, with roughly 700 state employees and approximately 300 contract staff. Of the 700 state employees at LCF, approximately 500 are uniformed corrections officers.

While the primary duty of the KDOC is to provide safety and security to the public, we provide that service in two essential ways. The first is basic security, which ensures the safety of the public by keeping the inmates safely and humanely incarcerated for the duration of their sentences. The other half of the picture is the implementation of the Risk Reduction concept, which involves taking the necessary steps to help the offender recognize and then make essential changes in their behavior to reduce the probability of re-offending. This is implemented through a variety of self-help programs, as well as staff utilizing Cognitive Reflection skills when interacting with the offenders. There is an extensive array of release planning and post-release support options made available to offenders. Statistics have shown that the more focus spent on preparing the offender for their release, the more successful they are. This has placed the KDOC at the fore-front of corrections in America today.

The majority of the offenders spend approximately 10-12 hours a day in their cells. The rest of their time is spent either working at one of the numerous jobs in the facility, in class or a program, or on the recreation yard. Inmates who are not employed or attending programs are usually unable to do so due to medical or security reasons.

Offenders receive about 1.5 hours a day for recreation and have visits on the weekends and holidays. They have access to a library on all three compounds and are allowed to purchase (or have family buy) books and magazine subscriptions.

The offenders can own a television, which is connected to a cable TV system. The cable system (funded by Inmate Benefit Fund money, not budget money) helps address several important issues for the institution, including removing all personal antennas from cells (a security issue), the pending transition to digital broadcasting and giving us the opportunity to show risk reduction programs on the facility's station, KPEN Channel Six. We also utilize the station to disseminate information to the inmate population, such as menus, schedules, events, etc. We can get information to the inmate population much quicker and more effectively than relying on bulletin boards or word of mouth. The Warden has a regularly broadcast show where he addresses a variety of questions submitted by offenders and interviews guests from all over the facility. The improved communication can and has reduced potential problems by alerting the residents to pending changes or disruptions to normal operations.

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**VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

because he had something he wanted to say to me. My friend and I were taken out of the room to give Rafael some time. When we went back in the conference room, he told me how very sorry he was for all of the pain and hurt that he caused me and my family and that he knew he could never bring Justin back to me. He said he felt so worthless and so ashamed and asked for my forgiveness. I then told him that I forgive him and then I hugged him. I felt him trembling as I held him. I felt a huge weight lifted off of my heart - one that I had put there myself.

There was a Department of Corrections counselor in the room with Rafael and when the meeting was over, he said he had worked at the prison for 35 years and had never witnessed anything like it. God gave me strength that day.

- Vicki Mercado

Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) is one of the many services OVS offers to victims of crime. Like the majority of OVS programs VOD must be initiated by a victim/survivor.

Meeting face to face with the offender who has severely impacted your life is not for everyone, but those who go through this process have their own reasons and objectives for doing so. VOD can be about providing an opportunity for victims/survivors to feel heard and enabling offenders to understand and embody genuine accountability.

VOD can provide victims/survivors the opportunity to get more information about a loved one who was killed, tell the offender about their loved one, let the offender know what impact the crime has had on their life, and/or find out what life has been like for the offender. Dialogue may also offer the offender the opportunity to apologize or

express remorse. Reasons for going through the VOD process are guided by what the victim/survivor seeks.

Trained facilitators guide the VOD process and help both parties prepare. In Fall 2009 OVS will be partnering with trained Offender Victim Ministries (OVM) VOD facilitators to increase the number of victims/survivors served through this program. We are looking forward to this partnership and to the increase in our ability to serve victims/survivors through VOD.

If you would like more information about Victim Offender Dialogue please contact Carla Wozniak at 785-817-2594.

**LANSING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5**

Offenders must behave appropriately to earn the right to have a TV, as well as the chance to participate in arts & crafts programs and other activities. Their behavior affects how much they can spend at the canteen, whether their visits are conducted as contact or non-contact and their eligibility for certain jobs in the facility.

Inappropriate behavior can result in loss of jobs, custody, visiting and more. Rule infractions can also result in loss of Good Time, which moves the offender's Release Date back.

There are numerous opportunities for offenders to work for privately owned industries, where they can learn a valid job skill, make prevailing wages (equal to the market for that job) and

build a savings account to help the transition back into society. While employed for private industries, the men pay room & board to the state, any outstanding court costs, fees, fines, restitution, child support, etc. Not only does this help these men repay their debt to society, it allows them to make amends to their families and become part of their lives again. Offenders working private industries have helped their children with everything from buying clothes for school to college tuition, as well as helping their wives with financial difficulties like car or home repairs, doctor's bills and more. The value of leaving prison with a job skill and a real bank account cannot be underestimated. To many of these

men, this can make the difference between success and failure. The opportunity to return to their families as an asset instead of a liability can instill a sense of pride and determination to succeed.

Staff at the facility can take a sense of pride in their work, knowing that they are making Kansas a better and safer place to live. Through their actions, they help protect society while performing their duties as corrections officers, role models, counselors, teachers, mentors and fellow human beings. We all know that it is much more than just a job, what we do here is an investment in tomorrow and beyond.

We are on the Web!

[www.doc.ks.gov/victim-services](http://www.doc.ks.gov/victim-services)

**OFFICE OF VICTIM  
SERVICES**

Kansas Department of Corrections  
Office of Victim Services  
900 SW Jackson 400-N  
Topeka, KS 66612-1284  
Phone: 620-331-7787  
Toll-free: 866-404-6732  
E-mail: [victimwitness@doc.ks.gov](mailto:victimwitness@doc.ks.gov)



Office of Victim  
Services

**“ G I V I N G   K A N S A S   C R I M E   V I C T I M S  
A   V O I C E   I N   C O R R E C T I O N S   B Y  
P R O V I D I N G   I N F O R M A T I O N ,  
S E R V I C E S   A N D   S U P P O R T   W I T H  
C O M P A S S I O N   A N D   R E S P E C T ”**

**VICTIM SERVICES LIAISONS**

Facility Liaison Services

Visitation/Contact Screening

Release Plan Screening

Cease Correspondence

Facility Tours

Attend Public Comment Sessions

Assistance with Navigating the System

Victim Initiated Services

Public Comment Session  
Advocacy Program

Facility Tours

Victim/Offender Dialogue

Parole Liaisons

Facility Liaisons

Apology Repository

Personalized Web Page

[www.doc.ks.gov/victim/  
victim.asp](http://www.doc.ks.gov/victim/victim.asp)

Notification Services

Public Comment Session

Release Status - Parole,  
Conditional Release or  
Post-Release

Assignment to a Work Release  
Program

Eligibility for a Community  
Service Work Assignment

Application for Clemency

Supervision Revocation

Expiration of Sentence

Death of inmate

Escape

Application for Early Discharge

Interstate Compact

Absconders

Sexually Violent Predator

Parole Liaison Services

Safety Planning

Family Reintegration

Assistance with Investigations/Sanctions/  
Revocations/Morrissey Hearings

Work Closely with Community Partners

Provide Referrals