

# Collaborations

*The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.*

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## Our Project In Perspective *by Scott Beard*

As I considered what to write for this initial newsletter, I began to think about the reasons why we are engaged in this endeavor. The answer lies with the victims who are suffering because of the lack of services, resources, or information available to them as a result of their spiritual or cultural beliefs. I think of the woman who is told to go home and be a better wife when she reveals to her faith leader that her husband is abusing her, or the family whose loved one was shot and killed and the authorities failed to observe the families' religious practices in handling the remains. Misinformation and misinterpretation of faith traditions is a way of life for many victims. But the reality of responding effectively to our "Melting Pot" society with its literally thousands of cultures and faith traditions, can be overwhelming.

To address this problem, it may help to examine the history of the victims' movement and the efforts made by its pioneers. (continued on p. 2)



A Brief History of MCVRC: In April 1982, Stephanie Roper was kidnapped, brutally raped, tortured and murdered. Following their experience with the criminal justice system, Roberta and Vince Roper founded the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation. In 2002, we became the MD Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.. The organization is a non-profit, volunteer advocacy and assistance organization with the main purpose of being a voice for victims of criminal violence.

**"One person can make a difference—and every person should try." Stephanie Roper**

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First, it is noteworthy to understand that the victims' movement as we know it today, is still in its infancy. It wasn't until the urbanization of America in the 1950's followed by the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960's and 1970's that whole sectors of our population suffering from social inequality - got a voice! Moreover, the Anti-Vietnam War efforts helped push social activism to a whole new level.

The "Victims' Movement" as we know it, was born out of these raised voices. The "movement" grew from the very first programs established in 1972 to tens of thousands of programs today. The leaders of the "Victims' Movement" began to incorporate themselves into every sector of society. They became established in police departments, prosecutor's offices, and even the military.

Other disciplines took up the victims' mantle as well. Early on, the mental health field strove to understand why soldiers coming home from Vietnam shared common issues with rape victims. The medical field was called upon to establish forensic protocols for rape, child abuse and domestic violence victims. It seemed that no discipline was immune to the reform minded victim groups. A few individuals began to explore the spiritual aspects of victimization in the 1980's. These far sighted individuals established faith related victim service programs. They included David & Anne Delaplane who founded "Spiritual Dimension," and Bob Denton who founded and still runs a community based victim service mission in Akron, Ohio. Furthermore, several faith communities developed customized programs for their leaders and congregants surrounding victim issues.

But it was clear the two communities were working separately. One of many possible reasons for the faith community's lack of connection with the victims' movement was that they believed they were already providing victim services through their faith's teachings. On the other hand in many communities, secular victim service programs evolved without the inclusion of a faith component. Ultimately, the two communities followed divergent paths to address crime victim issues. The result was that many victims fell through the cracks or they were not served to the fullest extent possible.

The missing component was a cohesive national effort to meet the needs of crime victims who are facing a spiritual crisis in the aftermath of criminal victimization. I commend the leaders of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) for understanding this need and formulating a plan of action to meet that need.

So here we are! The participants in this project are ready to blaze new trails for the victims' movement. We are testing new theories that may find their way into communities all over the United States. I applaud the forethought of each of the participating agencies for their thoughtful and inspiring work to reach victims in their communities who may otherwise suffer in silence.

In our continuing evolution, I hope we continue to strive to prevent injustice in all of its forms. Whatever our spiritual or cultural background, freedom to worship God as we choose should including two components: a healing of the spirit to help recover from victimization and a safe place to seek spiritual guidance without blame.

### *Bibliography—The following articles are available online*

- \* Toolkit to End Violence Against Women: What Communities of Faith can do to make a difference - <http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/files/fullchapter12.pdf>
- \* Spirituality and Drunk Driving Victimization - [www.madd.org/news/0,1056,2026,00.html](http://www.madd.org/news/0,1056,2026,00.html)
- \* Faith Based Institutions and High Risk Youth, First Report from the Field by Harold Dean Trulear, Spring 2000 - [www.ppv.org/contents/reports/faithhighrisk.html](http://www.ppv.org/contents/reports/faithhighrisk.html).
- \* Denver VS2000 Collaboration Training Model - [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/bulletins/VS2000trainingmodel/welcome.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/bulletins/VS2000trainingmodel/welcome.html)

### *Websites of interest*

Department of Justice Task Force for Faith Based & Community Initiatives - [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fbci](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fbci)  
The Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence - [www.cpsdv.org](http://www.cpsdv.org)  
The White House Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives - [www.fbci.gov](http://www.fbci.gov)  
Health and Human Services Center for Faith Based & Community Initiatives - [www.hhs.gov/faith](http://www.hhs.gov/faith)  
Foundation Center *Gateway to organized giving* - [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)  
Gifts in Kind International *Product charity* - [www.giftsinkind.org](http://www.giftsinkind.org)  
GrantSmart *Information on private foundation activities* - [www.grantSMART.org](http://www.grantSMART.org)  
Hoover's Online *A source for information on corporations* - [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)

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