



Local Law Enforcers Honored During National Crime Victims' Rights Week

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Belleville, IL - April 6th marked the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. On Friday April 11th, Rescue and Restore of Southwestern IL and Hoyleton Ministries hosted a candlelight vigil in honor of crime victims at 7:00pm followed by a 5K Glow Run at The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows.

This event commemorated our nation's progress in advancing victims' rights by honoring local law enforcement and partner agency champions in advocating for expanded support and services to communities affected by crime.

This year's theme - *30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice* - presented a perfect opportunity to salute local law enforcement and their long-term commitment to aiding crime victims. As we celebrate three decades of defending victims' rights, we are reminded of how far we have come - and how much work is yet to be done. Members of Rescue and Restore honored the following local law enforcement officials for their dedication to justice and victim advocacy:

Mark Krug from Collinsville Police Department & Dave Vucich from Madison County Sherriff's Department for their efforts to combat child exploitation;

Frank Bennett from St. Clair County Sherriff's Department, Ryan Weisenborn from Fairview Heights Police Department, & Shannon Wolff from Randolph County Police Department for their work to combat domestic violence;

Jamie Brunnworth from Illinois State Police & Jason Frank from Swansea Police Department for their efforts to address violent crimes;

Dan Cook from the FBI for his efforts to combat assault and robberies;

Julie Neiger from the FBI & Neal Rohlfing from Fairview Police Department for their valiant efforts on recent cases;

The Madison County Sherriff's Department, Alton Police Department, & Columbia



Police

Department for their standing commitment and efforts to defend crime victims.

Only 30 years ago, crime victims had virtually no rights and no assistance. The criminal justice system often seemed indifferent to their needs. Victims were commonly excluded from courtrooms and denied the chance to speak at sentencing. They had no access to victim compensation or services to help rebuild their lives. There were few avenues to deal with their emotional and physical wounds. Victims were on their own to recover their health, security, and dignity.

Today, the nation has made dramatic progress in securing rights, protections, and services for victims. Every state has enacted victims' rights laws, and all have victim compensation programs. More than 10,000 victim service agencies now help people throughout the country. In 1984, Congress passed the bipartisan Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which created a national fund to ease victims' suffering. Financed not by taxpayers but by fines and penalties paid by offenders, the Crime Victims Fund supports

victim services, such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs and victims' compensation programs that pay many of victims' out-of-pocket expenses from the crime, such as counseling, funeral expenses, and lost wages.

Victims' rights advocates have scored remarkable victories over the last 30 years. But there is still a lot of work to be done. As we move forward, we are increasingly expanding our reach to previously underserved victim populations, including victims of color, American Indians and Alaska Natives, adults molested as children, victims of elder abuse, and LGBTQ victims. Over three decades, VOCA pioneered support efforts for victims of once-hidden crimes, like domestic and sexual violence. Today, we are shining a spotlight on other abuses that have been long unreported and often not prosecuted - hate and bias crimes, bullying, and sex and labor trafficking, among others.

"Our commitment to reaching every victim of crime is stronger than ever," said Joye E. Frost, Director, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), U.S. Department of Justice. "For 30 years, VOCA has represented hope, healing, and justice. Our message to all victims of crime is this: You are not alone."

National Crime Victims' Rights Week was held April 6-12 in communities throughout the nation. In Washington, DC, the U.S. Department of Justice kicked off the week with OVC's annual Service Awards Ceremony to honor outstanding individuals and programs that service victims of crime.

OVC encouraged widespread participation in the week's events and encourages participation in other victim-related observances throughout the year. For additional information about 2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week and how to help victims in your community, please contact Hoyleton Ministries at (618) 213-3170 or visit www.hoyleton.org.

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