

# THE VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

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## OFFENDER VISITATION

by Mike Jones

*TDCJ Victim Services Division*

*Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse*

Every weekend Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional staff gear up to receive thousands of visitors to institutional facilities across the state. TDCJ recognizes that visitation plays an important role in maintaining bonds between offenders and their friends and family. It keeps offenders socialized, so they may be less likely to re-offend upon release. Visitation is essential for maintaining offender morale and is an "integral component of the rehabilitation process." Although the visitation process at TDCJ units is very complex, it is conducted in the most accommodating manner possible while maintaining order and security.



Photo courtesy TDCJ Media Services

Regular visitation at a TDCJ unit.

**T**HE FIRST THING PEOPLE should know about offender visitation is that it is a privilege for offenders and not a right. Visitation privileges are based on the offender's custody level and disciplinary record. Unit wardens have discretion to allow, take away, or restrict visitation privileges according to an offender's behavior. Offenders are not assigned to units to accommodate visitors or how far they may have to travel. They are assigned to units based on many factors, such as age, length of sentence, recidivism and institutional history while ensuring offender treatment and security needs are met.

### VISITATION BASICS

There are two types of visitation: regular visitation and contact visitation. (No, there are no conjugal visits in Texas!) Regular visitation is conducted with glass or wire between the visitor and the offender, so the offender has no physical contact with the visitor. Contact visitation allows physical contact between the offender and visitor, but only immediate family members of the offender are allowed contact visits. At a contact visit on many units, the offender and visitors sit at a table similar to a picnic table. Offenders and contact visitors may briefly embrace and kiss before and after the visitation period and may hold hands above the table during visitation. Adults must sit on the opposite side of the table from the offender; children can sit on either side. Only general population levels one, two, three, and four (not in disciplinary status) offenders are allowed to have contact visits.

An offender may have up to ten adults on his/her visitation list. Only the offender can request to have someone approved for his/her visitor list. He/she can request to add and remove

visitors from the list once every six months, with approval by unit administration. The offender must supply a current address for each approved visitor on his/her list, which is required to match what is on the valid driver's license or picture ID the visitor uses to enter the unit.

Visitation is usually conducted on Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Death row visitation, which must be scheduled in advance, is conducted from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday and from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm on Saturday. Media visitation for female death row offenders is from 1:00 pm through 3:00 pm Tuesdays at the Mountain View Unit in Gatesville. Media visitation for men's death row is 1:00 pm through 3:00 pm Wednesdays at the Polunsky Unit in Livingston. Normally, eligible offenders can have one, two-hour visit per visiting cycle; the visiting cycle begins on Monday and ends on Sunday. Some units may adjust this schedule to include Friday, depending on the volume of visits, space and staffing limitations. Facilities that house administrative segregation (Ad Seg) populations may arrange visitation through the week by appointment. (Administrative segregation refers to a non-punitive, maximum custody status involving separation of an offender from the general population within the prison for the purpose of maintaining safety, security and order among general population, correctional personnel, and the public.) Offenders in solitary confinement are not allowed visitation. If a state holiday—except for Christmas Day—falls on a Monday or Friday, visitors may be allowed to arrange visits on these days.

Offenders are allowed only two adult visitors at a time during visitation. If an offender has more than two adults who

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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...

Beginning with this issue of *The Victim's Informer* are the first two installments of an eight-part series entitled, "A Day in the Life of ..." There are so many people involved in the criminal justice process, but how many of us know what everyone's role is within the system? For this series, we decided to "shadow" a small group of participants in the process to learn and share with you what a typical day is like for them.

The series will be presented in a kind of chronological order, beginning with first responders. For these introductory pieces, Clearinghouse staff rode with a sergeant with the Austin Police Department as well as members of the Crisis Team.

The second set of articles in the series, which will publish in the March/April 2011 issue, will be about the typical day for a victim assistance coordinator and a prosecutor in a district attorney's office. The third set, June/July 2011, will be about a parole officer and a corrections officer. We will finish the series in the September/October 2011 issue highlighting the typical day of an incarcerated offender and a victim.

The series, of course, does not include everyone in the process; there are many others who play important roles in this complex system, too many for the Clearinghouse to "shadow." We will try to touch on how intertwined everyone's relationship in the process is and how dependent we are on our colleagues and counterparts.

During the year it will take to publish all the sections, if you find you are someone who is involved in the criminal justice process and would like to share your "typical" day, contact us about submitting an article about your role; we think it's important for everyone to have an idea about what others are doing.

## Crisis Team Counselors

by Lauren Reynolds

*TDCJ Victim Services Division*

*Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse*

**M**IKE JONES AND I spent ten hours each with crisis counselors in the Victim Services Division of the Austin Police Department (APD). Although no license is required, all the members of the crisis team have master's degrees. Two counselors work during the day and three to four work overnight, and those who work the ten hour day shift have the support of an office staff. Most of the time the two daytime counselors who respond to the scene when called by an APD officer are either Marchelle Kappler or Jeanne Cohn; the two crisis counselors we shadowed. Marchelle has been a crisis response counselor for ten years and cannot see herself doing anything else. Her time with a victim may be short, but in that time she knows she must "plant seeds." By guiding a victim through the first raw moments following a traumatic event, she can create a brief yet impactful relationship with a victim and prepare her for what will happen next.

Marchelle operates primarily in north Austin and Jeanne south. Their vehicles are equipped with the same laptop computer found in many police cruisers. The computer lists active calls and prioritizes them with codes, zero being the most urgent. The crisis team monitors these calls and can anticipate when they may get called. If they see a call come up as a Code 0, they usually begin heading in the direction of the scene, so they can be on scene quickly if a crisis counselor is requested. Crisis counselors carry no weapons and rely on police officers to

keep them and the victims safe.

During the day shift, crisis counselors are more likely to be called to the scenes of natural deaths, baby deaths, suicides, sexual assaults and robbery. Many times crisis counselors will transport victims to the hospital and stay with them there, especially if the incident involves an assault.

I met Marchelle at the APD North Substation on Friday, September 24 at the start of her shift at 06:00. In the ten hours that followed, I would be able to witness how important it is for help to be there when someone is in need. As we pulled out of the parking lot and drove down the highway, I learned the first trick of the trade—use your time wisely, because shifts are unpredictable. Since we were not called to an incident at the start of the shift, we had time for a quick breakfast. A police radio was kept at arm's reach any time Marchelle left her vehicle. If we had received a call, we would have responded immediately and abandoned our food. Some days there is little time for breakfast or lunch, while others allow for both. I shadowed Marchelle on a day consisting of the latter. I was able to ask a lot of questions, and Marchelle talked about what her job means to her. I received a run-down of police codes as well as APD's break-down of Austin sectors and districts.

After breakfast, Marchelle explained what was going on with the active calls we saw on the computer screen. The morning progressed slowly with only a few calls appearing on the screen, none

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# Bridges to Life

by Jesse Doiron

*Bridges to Life Volunteer and Adjunct Instructor of English for the Inmate Instruction Program of Lamar State College-Port Arthur*

No one knows the last thoughts of the pretty, young woman. But Marilyn's brother, John Sage, remembers the details of her murder every day—17 years later—every day. Yet in the agony that must have been Marilyn's last moments, Sage has found some hope. The program he founded in 1998, Bridges to Life, is his memory of Marilyn made beautiful again. BTL, as Sage's program is widely known, is one of the most transformative rehabilitation programs now operating in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

This year, Sage will see his 11,000th inmate complete the program he devised to change lives both in and out of prison. To effect these changes, Sage has enlisted hundreds of volunteers, many of them survivors of crime, to spend thousands of hours locked in conversation with those who have harmed and robbed and killed. Their conversations form the bridges that allow the pain of crime to change to hope as it passes to either side.

Every year, BTL accomplishes remarkable results through the efforts of a steadfast group of victim volunteers who visit prisons across the state to tell their own difficult stories, and, through the telling, transform themselves and those who listen.

Meet three of the eight hundred volunteers who have joined John Sage in his work through Bridges to Life:

## Kelly Morris

*"People heard what was happening, heard the shots, called the police. They saw one of them throw the gun into a trash can. That night, one of them was arrested. In the back of the police cruiser, he mumbled a confession of sorts that was recorded by open mic in the cab of the patrol car. He rambled on about how he had been left with the crime."*

Kelly's sister, Mickey Goodwin, was murdered, execution style, in 2002 during a robbery of a sandwich shop in Mesquite. She was one of two victims gunned down by two robbers.

*"It was a complete mess, a complete mess."*

Kelly works with BTL to keep her sister's memory alive. Mickey was a compassionate person who lived with others always in mind. The Christmas before her killing, she made treats for senior citizens. Kelly, on the other hand, admits she was unlike her sister in this regard. Before the murder, Kelly was self-absorbed.

*"I wanted to make sense out of Mickey's death."*

Kelly participated in a victim offender mediation/dialogue with one of the offenders. For Kelly, the six-hour meeting was a blur because all she could think about were the final moments of her sister's life.

*"I don't want her to be forgotten. I never forget her—every single day she is on my heart. When Mickey died, she*

*was only 26 years old. She just went to work and never came back."*

Kelly works with BTL at the Hutchins State Jail where her BTL colleagues are almost evenly divided between "victim" volunteers and "free-world" volunteers. She met Sage several months after she had been a part of the program he founded.

*"He just came to one of the small meetings we have with inmates and volunteer free-worlders. I didn't even know who he was really. He was incredibly personable, an easy person to talk to."*

For Kelly, the BTL experience has been a unique opportunity to share what happened to her family. Through the experience of crime, she has grown connected to other people in the program. Sharing what once was unbearable, Kelly and her fellow BTL volunteers are able to see some good beyond the evil they have suffered.

*"Every time I hear someone's story, it renews my belief in the connectedness of our lives. Despite the ugliness, there is a grace-filled positive that surfaces. This is what Mickey would do, I know that."*

## Jan Brown

*"I don't just talk about my daughter's murder. I tell the story with every part of me. I'm willing to let people see what her murder did to me."*

Kandy. Born 11/22/77 Died 5/12/87

*"When the man who killed Kandy was alive, it was all about him. From*

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# You Can Make It Through Happy Holidays

**Janice Harris Lord**

*Texas Board of Criminal Justice Board Member*

**Y**OUR LOVED ONE may have been murdered or killed in a vehicular crash and you are dreading the forthcoming holidays. The onslaught of holiday cheer may seem too much to bear. Since grief reactions are highly individual, family members may have differing views on how to cope during the holidays, adding to the stress. The cold and dark of winter, added to challenging holiday tasks, can feel overwhelming.

Families who have made this pilgrimage offer the following suggestions to help those who may be just starting down the path. Many of them were surprised to discover that the anticipation of a holiday was more difficult than the actual holiday. Holidays can be manageable if you take charge of them rather than letting them take charge of you.

**Change Traditions.** Trying to pretend that this holiday season will be like those that went before it will only intensify the difference. Gather the family and decide which traditions you want to keep and which ones you want to let go. Be willing to make changes to accommodate the needs and wishes of those who are hurting the most.

**Create a Special Tribute.** Some families light a special candle and place it on a holiday table to honor the memory of a loved one who has died. Others keep a chair empty and place a flower or other memorial on the seat. Some write treasured remembrances and place them on a special plate or bowl for those who wish to read them.

**Plan Where to Spend the Holidays.** Many people think going away will make the holidays easier. This may be helpful if you will be with people who love and nurture you. However, if travel is arranged as a means of trying to avoid the holiday atmosphere, remember that American holidays are celebrated throughout this country and in many parts of the world. A change of scenery can be very useful, but recognize that it is impossible to escape holiday reminders.

**Balance Solitude with Sociability.** Rest and solitude can help renew strength. On the other hand, friends and family are a wonderful source of support if they accept you as you are and do not try to tell you how they think you should feel. If you are invited to holiday outings, make an effort to go. Attend musical or other cultural events that lift your spirits. You may surprise

yourself by enjoying special outings, even if you feel like crying later.

**Relive Fond Memories.** Think about holiday seasons you enjoyed in the past and identify a few memories you want to hold in your heart forever. No one can take those away from you. Celebrate them and be grateful. If feelings of sadness pop up at inappropriate times, such as at work or in a public gathering, try thinking about what you have rather than what you no longer have. Focus on the blessing of the memories in your heart.

**Set Aside Some “Letting Go” Time.** Schedule time to be alone and release sad and lonely pent-up feelings. You may want to cry or write about your thoughts and feelings. You may choose to write a letter to the one who died to say “Goodbye,” “I love you,” or “I’m sorry.” Even though it may feel strange, allow your loved one to write back to you through your pen. You may be surprised at what you write. By setting aside special times to allow painful feelings to surface, it becomes easier to postpone expressing them in public.

**Counter the Conspiracy of Silence.** Family members may consciously or unconsciously conspire to avoid mentioning the tragedy in your family. This is usually a well-intentioned but misguided attempt to protect your feelings. If this seems to be happening, take the initiative and talk to your family about the importance of talking openly about what has happened.

**Try to Notice the Positive.** Some people conclude that facing the holidays is simply “awful.” By deciding prematurely that “everything is awful,” you are generalizing irrationally from your personal tragedy. Although you may have difficult times during the holidays, you also may experience joy. Accept the love and care of others. Reach out to someone else who is suffering. Give yourself permission to feel sad and to experience joy.

**Find a Creative Outlet.** If you have difficulty talking about your feelings, consider other creative ways to express yourself. Write a poem or story that you can share with others. Buy watercolors or oils and put your feelings on paper or canvas, even if it’s only splashes of color. Contribute to a favorite charity or organization.

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## Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles: *What to Expect in an Interview*

**Jackie DeNoyelles**

*Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Board Member*

**V**ICTIMS ARE OFTEN filled with anxiety in anticipation of an interview with a Parole Board member or commissioner. Hopefully, by explaining the process, this article will help to dispel some of the fear.

The Victim's Informer article June/July edition outlined who is entitled to a personal appearance on the victim's behalf. This article will explain the actual interview process.

In addition to accepting input from victims of crime, voting members also hear from offender families and advocates, including attorneys, as well as trial officials before rendering a final decision. Finally, this article will discuss the Board Directive mandating the lead voter interview the offender if they have been incarcerated for 20 consecutive years.

Victims frequently ask if the offender will be in the room during the interview. Unlike what you may have seen on television programs like Parole Board, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles does not sit together in panels and question offenders in person. Institutional Parole Officers interview the offender on the prison unit and prepare a detailed summary that is sent to the Board office for careful review prior to the decision by the parole panel. The summary includes a detailed description of the offense, the offender's criminal, social, and institutional adjustment history.

Contact is made with victims who have registered with the Victims Services Division and expressed the desire to speak to the Board prior to the decision. In the vast majority of cases the interview is conducted by telephone, but the victim can exercise their right for a personal appearance. Parole Board members and commissioners are located in six regional offices around the state. Offenders are never brought into the offices. The lead voter, who is the first voter in the case, conducts the interview with the victim. It is an informal process. The victim will be asked what input they have regarding parole for the offender. All correspondence and interview notes, which are confidential, are placed in the offender's file permanently.

Any board member, parole commissioner, or representative of the board may interview any person who wishes to present or submit information for and in behalf of any person within the jurisdiction of the board upon proper registration and presentation of any necessary fee affidavit. Such interview shall

not be deemed to be a hearing and shall not be public. The vast majority of these interviews are conducted by telephone. Only attorneys are required to be registered and file a fee affidavit.

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Directive 141.355 outlines the procedure for offender parole interviews if incarcerated for 20 consecutive years. Section 508.141 of the *Texas Government Code* provides that, before releasing an inmate on parole, the panel may conduct an interview with the offender. The purpose of the interview is to provide the offender an opportunity to present information, make a statement(s) and provide document(s) to the voting member. This interview is not open to the public.

The procedure is as follows:

- I. Offenders who have been incarcerated in the TDCJ CID for 20 consecutive years or more and have never been released on parole will be interviewed by the lead voter if the offender has not been interviewed by a voting member during the last two parole reviews.
- II. Prior to voting the case, the Lead Voter of the parole panel shall schedule and conduct an interview with the offender at the offender's unit of assignment. Time and duration of the interview shall be established at the discretion of the Lead Voter.
- III. For cases that require an extraordinary vote, the Lead Voter is a board member. For all other cases, the Lead Voter may be a board member or parole commissioner.
- IV. This directive does not apply to offenders who are in disciplinary status, diagnosed by medical staff as mentally ill or impaired, housed in administration segregation, determined to be a violent or considered dangerous as determined by TDCJ CID staff or offenders incarcerated in a FCI (federal correctional institution).
- V. A record of the interview and any documents received from the offender during the interview shall be placed in the offender's file. The interview should be documented in the file on the minute sheet.

Decisions to grant, or deny, parole are made after careful consideration of all information made available to the voting members.

**Bridges; continued from page 3**

the time they arrested him until he died, it was all about him. Few seemed to care about what had happened to Kandy or the affect it had on me.”

“Nobody seemed to care that I had lost the greatest treasure of my life.”

Jan searched her soul for meaning in what had happened. Her life seemed to have no purpose.

“The first time I went into the prison, did a project and told my story, all of a sudden, five people cared. Then five more. Then people told me that hearing my story changed their life. Then, what had happened to Kandy and me had meaning.”

Jan has been a BTL volunteer almost from the outset of the program. Her story is included in Restoring Peace, the BTL book used in prisons throughout the state.

“Instead of being just another dead little girl, Kandy is a meaningful reality to those whose lives have been changed by hearing her story in BTL. Kandy’s life and death and BTL give my life a higher purpose.”

For Jan, BTL is a major part of her life. The program has improved her life by giving her a way to help others make a better life for themselves and their families in a very unlikely setting, prison.

“I have learned to put the story in a box, a kind of spiritual container; so Kandy’s murder doesn’t take up more of my life than I am willing to give it. I am not just another victim; I am victorious through my BTL journey.”

**Brandon Willard**

“I want to take my experience—the bed sores, the confinement, the lack of freedom, the daily pain, the humiliations—I want to take all of my life just as it is now and show it to the young in-

vincible who think they really are invincible.”

**C6 – C7 Quadriplegic**

“The first time I met John Sage, he came to my house one evening to talk to me and my mother about volunteering with BTL, but I was already there in my mind and soul. I was willing before he walked into the living room.”

Brandon has frightening photographs on his MySpace site. The slide show of the car wreck takes you through a scene of unrecognizable wreckage—torn metal, bewildered people. The scene is even more disconcerting when you realize it depicts the second time the young man has survived an assault by a drunken driver.

“I don’t forget what happened.”

At 28, the handsome man is now paralyzed. Little takes place in Brandon’s world without special assistance.

“I tell you, though, it is even more frustrating being around and watching my friends and family, and just society in general, seeing how much people take for granted all of the many blessings we are given by grace alone.”

Brandon uses the pronoun “we” when he speaks of grace and blessings, counting himself part of the gifted rather than the condemned. He does not discount the limitations of his life, nor does he let the criminal changes to his world dismay him.

“I’ve done things I shouldn’t have. Everyone has. But I’ve also learned from what I’ve done wrong, and

learning from mistakes is the essence of what I am trying to convey to the men and women I talk to in prisons. Accepting the mistake and changing yourself after the mistake is the essence of rehabilitation.”

In 2008, Brandon received the Governor’s Pathfinder Award for his work with Bridges to Life. He has been featured in the book Safe Road Home and in the DVD The Right Choice. Though his injuries are severe, he remains undaunted in his belief that he can make a significant impact on others.

“It is easy for an inmate to say he’s found God, or claim that he’s dropped his dependency on drugs or alcohol. But when the guy gets out of prison, the temptation gets back in his life. I know my time with an inmate can stay with him when the temptations start showing up after his release.”

Many BTL volunteers speak with the same kind of confidence. They do so because of what the program has given to them—a realization that their lives have

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**Bridges to Life 2010 Program**

Projects	52
Texas Prisons	23
Out-of-State Prisons	5
Juvenile Facilities	3
Estimated Graduates	2, 100
Free World Volunteers	310
Graduates to Date	10,406
Recidivism Rates	17.4% (overall) 11.3% (new conviction) 6.1% (technical violation) 1.2% (violent crime)

**Visitation;** *continued from front page*

want to visit during a visitation cycle, he may split the two hours between them. TDCJ does not necessarily limit the number of children allowed to visit an offender, but the number of children allowed is based on the availability of space and the visitor's ability to control the children. Children 17 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. However, with prior written approval from the unit warden, children 16 and 17 may be allowed to visit on their own if they do not have an adult available to accompany them.

Offenders convicted of sexual offenses against children or offenses causing bodily injury to a child are restricted from having contact visits with anyone under 17. An offender may have a general visit with a child under the age of 17, only if the offender is the legally recognized parent of the child and the child was not the victim of the offense. The legal guardian must complete an affidavit attesting that the offender is the legally recognized parent of the child and that the child was not the victim before the visit can occur.

**SPECIAL VISITS**

Visitors who live more than 300 miles from the unit may request to have a special four-hour visit. A total of eight hours visiting with a maximum of four hours per day on two consecutive days may be permitted by special arrangement. Offenders can have only one special visit each month. (The official state mileage guide is the only source used to determine point-to-point distance between a visitor's home town and the offender's unit.)

**THE VISITATION PROCESS**

All vehicles and visitors are subject to search upon entering TDCJ property. Security staff at the unit's vehicle

checkpoint verify visitor IDs and visibly search the inside of the vehicle. They may search a vehicle more thoroughly if they believe a sufficient reason exists. Alcohol, tobacco, controlled substances, as well as any item that could be made into a weapon or instrument to aid in an escape are strictly forbidden on the units. Other items not allowed inside the unit are any food items, diaper bags, brief cases, cameras, lighters or matches, cell phones or pagers, computers, and digital recorders. Anyone who is found to be in possession of contraband may be removed from an offender's visitation list. All visitors who enter the unit must empty their pockets, remove their belts and shoes, and are screened by a metal detector. Their personal items pass through an x-ray machine (on units where they are available). All visitors are pat searched. If staff believes a sufficient reason exists, a visitor may be strip searched, but the visitor must give his or her consent to be searched. However, any visitor who refuses to be searched must leave the unit and will not be allowed to visit. Pat and strip searches are conducted only by staff of the same sex as the visitor.

Visitors are required to dress very conservatively. Shirt and shoes are required. Shorts and cutoffs are not allowed. No revealing clothes or clothes that are offensive in nature are allowed. White shirt or blouse and white pants or skirt worn together are prohibited. (Offenders on TDCJ operated facilities wear all white clothing, so staff must be able to easily determine visitors from offenders.) Visitors who do not satisfy the dress code must leave and change into appropriate clothing if they want to enter the unit.

Essentially, visitors are allowed to bring limited items into the unit. They must have valid IDs. Visitors are al-

lowed to bring in a small wallet, clear plastic bag (Ziploc type) or change purse. Visitors may bring up to \$25 in coins to purchase items from vending machines. Visitors with infants or small children may bring in a limited number of baby items, such as a limited number of diapers and wipes; these items also must be in a clear plastic bag.

After check-in, visitors are seated in the visitation area at an assigned table on the side of the table designated for visitors. The contact visitation area is arranged to control where offenders sit in relation to other offenders and visitors for safety reasons as well as to eliminate offenders passing contraband items to each other. There are indoor and outdoor visitation areas. Some female units also have designated play areas for children.

Visitors can buy soft drinks and snacks from vending machines in the visitation area for themselves and the offender they are visiting, but all items must be consumed during the visit. TDCJ does not own the vending machines or collect money from them. Only visitors and staff are allowed to operate the vending machines, and all purchased items are inspected by unit staff before they are given to offenders.

Offenders are strip searched before they enter the visitation area. If they need to leave the area, to use the restroom during the visiting period for example, they are strip searched before they re-enter the visitation area. (The time it takes to go to the restroom counts on their visitation time limit.) Offenders are required to wear their TDCJ-issued whites, and shirts must be tucked in. Offenders are forbidden from passing any items to other offenders or visitors. Visitors cannot switch from visiting one offender to another.

Visits must be conducted in a quiet  
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### Visitation; continued from page 7

and orderly manner. During the visitation process, correctional staff monitor the visitation areas. They also remain available to answer visitors' questions or take complaints. They alert the visitors and offenders when the end of their visitation time is getting close and when the visit is over. Staff may monitor conversations between visitors and offenders. Prior to the offender being brought into the visitation area, other security staff have already verified things such as the type of visit allowed, the relationship of the visitors to the offenders, Visitation Restriction status, and the distance the visitors have traveled if they are requesting a special visit. A family liaison officer is also available to assist offender family members and other persons during visits and aid those persons in resolving problems that may affect permitted visits with offenders.

The Duty Warden has the authority to cancel or deny a visit if he or she has reason to believe the visit or visitor may compromise the safety and security of the offenders, staff, other visitors, or the unit. He or she may also remove a person from an offender's visitation list. Visitors who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, who refuse or fail to produce sufficient identification, who refuse to be searched or have their vehicle searched, or who knowingly violate TDCJ visitation rules will not be allowed to visit and may be removed from the visitation list.

### OTHER TYPES OF VISITATION

Offenders may request visits from spiritual advisors who are not on the offender's visitation list. The spiritual advisor must provide sufficient credentials, such as a minister ID,

a license, or an ordination certificate, to obtain permission to visit. Prospective employers also may be given permission to visit offenders, but they must provide sufficient identification in order to visit.

At the warden's discretion, offenders who are seriously or critically ill may receive visitors outside the normal scope of visitation rules. These offenders may be housed at a unit, a free world hospital, or the Hospital Galveston (a TDCJ medical facility). The warden and unit medical staff determine where the visitation will occur depending on the offender's health condition.

Under strict guidelines, visits between offenders may be granted as well as visits between current or former TDCJ employees. Attorney visits and legal visits between offenders are governed by a Board Policy 03.81, "Offender Access to the Courts, Counsel, and Public Officials Rules."

For the unit staff, visitation can be an effective disciplinary tool used to encourage positive offender behavior. For offenders, visitation with family and friends helps them adjust to institutional life, gives them something to look forward to, and encourages them to behave appropriately. The offender who has regular contact with his family and friends may be less likely to re-offend when he is eligible for parole or release.



### Bridges; continued from page 7

not been ended by crime. The power of BTL comes directly from this realization.

*"I play my cards and never fold. I'm alive. I'm here. I can share my life. I can share my story. I can make a difference."*

Years ago, John Sage felt that the memory of Marilyn's murder was a private agony, a life sentence of pain with no parole. Eleven thousand inmates later, Sage and his sister, Marilyn, remain in the minds of many, not as painful memories, but as a strong resolve to cross the bridges the two of them have built.

*Photo: Although hair styles have changed since this photo was taken years ago at the Goree Unit, everyone still gets dressed up for visitation. Did you notice the ashtray? TDCJ went smoke free in 1995.*

Photo courtesy Texas Prison Museum

## Counselors; continued from page 2

of which had need for a crisis counselor. Between 6:00 am and 10:00 am Marchelle is the only crisis counselor on duty; Jeanne's shift starts at 10:00 am. We planned to meet up with Jeanne and Mike for lunch as long as things stayed quiet. Sure enough, the rest of the morning passed uneventfully: "rider's curse." So, I took the opportunity to further question Marchelle about her job and things she has learned and grown to love about her job. She emphasized their role as the liaison between victims and law enforcement. The three primary tasks to accomplish with a victim are to stabilize, provide information, and give support. Luckily, around the time I ran out of questions was when we headed out to meet Mike and Jeanne for lunch.

The four of us were able to share more about what we do. Mike and I shared our purpose with TDCJ VSD and Marchelle and Jeanne were able to express what APD Victim Services was all about. It was amazing how much we learned about the other's programs and missions. Once lunch wrapped up I had begun to think about just calling it a day, since Marchelle had only two hours left until she headed back to the station. However, as soon as we got in the car with a plan to drive me back, we received a call; a young woman had died of a drug overdose. Guided by the computer's GPS system, we pulled up to a small house in east Austin, right behind Jeanne and Mike. Sitting on a small shaded deck in the backyard, we found a couple in their twenties. One of them was the younger sister of the deceased woman. She was visibly shaken. Jeanne worked with her the most, with Marchelle stepping in as needed. Marchelle and Jeanne spoke calmly, reassuring her, letting her know what to expect, and answering her questions. One delicate situation was how to notify the sister's parents, who lived

out of state. Although crisis counselors prefer to make death notifications in person, this situation would not allow it. Marchelle contacted the parents' priest to see if he could notify them in person. After talking with the priest, they all decided the best way to notify the parents was by cell phone. It was a difficult task and very difficult to overhear, but Marchelle did it with expected tact and professionalism. The parents were driving home following a short vacation and pulled to the side of the highway to learn one of their daughters had died.

Jeanne took the time with the younger sister, explaining certain feelings she may experience and what she might expect in the next few days, weeks, and months. After two hours Jeanne and Marchelle had done everything they could to provide her with support and give her an understanding of what might happen next. Jeanne told her that the investigation might be a long process and a lot of people could be involved, from police officers, detectives, to medical examiners. Since the house was a crime scene, the woman could not stay there. We went in and gathered some of her clothes and personal items to last her a few days while she stayed with friends. After we left this scene, Marchelle's shift was ending; Jeanne and Mike still had a few hours left. I asked Marchelle how she knows when to leave a scene and how long she usually stays with someone. She said that as you work in the field, you gain a sense of knowing when it is OK to leave a person in crisis and that you have done all you can do.

Earlier in their shift, Jeanne and Mike responded to a car accident in southwest Austin. There had been heavy rain earlier that morning, and a young mother had skidded off the road and into a ditch. She had a toddler and an infant in the car with her, but no one was hurt.

Jeanne's task was to transport the family to their home. The police cars at the scene were unable to anchor the car seats, and the woman's car was not drivable. Crisis counselors carry car seats, boosters, blankets and other baby items in their vehicles just for these kinds of situations. As it turned out, the woman's brother arrived, and he was able to drive her and the children home.

Later that afternoon, there was a call to assist a woman who feared her boyfriend was becoming assaultive. Jeanne calmed the woman down and explained what she might do to get protection. She helped her with making a safety plan and getting assistance from her employer. After the woman's fears were calmed and her confidence boosted, Jeanne and Mike left the scene thinking they were about done for the shift. But as they headed back to the south substation, a family violence call came in. Anticipating a need for crisis response, Jeanne headed to the scene.

They answered the call for assistance as they pulled into an apartment complex, just behind the duty sergeant. The police on the scene had responded to a call received from a neighbor. The husband allegedly had been drinking and became abusive. He was handcuffed and sitting in a police car when Jeanne and Mike arrived. The pregnant victim was on the couch in her apartment, wrapped in a blanket. She was very scared and could barely speak through her shaking and crying. In only a few minutes, Jeanne was able to calm her down enough for her to tell the police officers what had happened. Jeanne offered assistance with getting the woman safe and settled, let her know what to expect in the next few hours with the investigation and her husband's arrest.

With the situation now calm, Jeanne and Mike left for the South Substation to end the shift.

# It's Never Too Late

by Brooke McKay

*C.O.P.S. Marketing Coordinator*

IT TOOK JOHN MANNING sixteen years to reach out for help after his brother Corporal Donald Manning with the Fort Worth (TX) Police Department was shot and killed in the line of duty on June 27, 1993. John found his long overdue support through Concerns of Police Survivors' (C.O.P.S.) Siblings Retreat. For years, John struggled with the devastating loss of his brother, while he cared and worried about his four siblings and parents, but never took care of himself or asked for help.

C.O.P.S. Siblings Retreat was held at the YMCA Trout Lodge on Sunnen Lake in Potosi, Missouri, September 10-13, 2010. C.O.P.S. Siblings Retreat is held for the surviving siblings of America's fallen law enforcement heroes killed in the line of duty. This year 90 siblings and brothers/sisters-in-law attended the retreat. With activities that encourage teambuilding combined with professional counseling, siblings realize that they are not alone in the debilitating grief that often affects surviving brothers and sisters of fallen officers. The true effects of the death of a sibling are often postponed for almost two years since the surviving siblings are so engrossed in taking care of others. After those two years, losing a sibling in the line of duty impairs the daily lives of surviving siblings. Unfortunately, it took John much longer than the average two years to begin taking care of himself.

"After a while, I thought I had dealt with my brother's death. It was behind me—it was a long time ago. I just really thought I had dealt with it and it

was in the past. I started having some issues at home with my temperament and it was overflowing into my work," stated John.

In 2009, John reached the boiling point with internalized anger; he started functioning negatively because he never even acknowledged the anger stirring inside him for 16 years! When John hit his breaking point, his boss pulled him aside to say something had to change. John went home from work that day determined to put a plan in place to turn his life around.

"I went home and started looking online for something—anything for my 'get well plan.' It was the strangest thing, I went to look at the mail that day and there was C.O.P.S. Siblings Retreat registration. And I decided I needed to attend," said John.

John attended his first Siblings Retreat in September 2009. During the opening of the retreat, all the first-time attendees were asked to introduce themselves. John remembers the one sentence that changed everything, "I was one of the last people to introduce myself, and I had time to think about what I wanted to say. Once they got to me the Executive Director of C.O.P.S. looked at my name tag and questioned: '1993! Where have you been? Why are you here?' Again, I had all this time to think of what I wanted to say and I just stopped and said 'because I'm still p—ed off'; that statement was very strong and meant everything. It was me finally admitting I was hurting—hurting terribly."

John spent the weekend bonding with other law enforcement surviving

siblings from across the nation. They truly understood what he was feeling, many having gone through the same situation. He spent the weekend getting to know people, hearing their stories, and he realized in one short weekend that he wasn't alone. There was help out there for him!

At the retreat, strong peer support is coupled with professional counseling and challenges to learn new outdoor skills. Rope obstacle courses, shotgun, fishing, and archery classes help participants deal with the difficulties they are experiencing from the death of their sibling. The attendees leave the retreat with a new, tremendous sense of personal growth, self-awareness, self-esteem, and an understanding of the issues that accompany grief.

This year, John returned to the Siblings Retreat and was asked to share his story. "I guess my story is that you have to seek help, so you can address the emotional aftermath of a tragic line of duty death. If you don't address the issues, they cause long-term problems. I am so thankful that I discovered Concerns of Police Survivors' Siblings Retreat before it was too late for me."

Concerns of Police Survivors' mission is to "rebuild shattered lives" of the surviving family members and affected co-workers of law enforcement officers who have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. In addition to the Siblings Retreat, C.O.P.S. hosts a kids camp, wilderness experience for surviving teenagers, and weekend retreats for adult children, parents, spouses, in-laws, and affected co-workers of fallen officers.

*continued on page 11*

## TDCAA Victim Services Update

by Suzanne McDaniel

TDCAA Victim Services Director

**G**REAT NEWS from the Texas District & County Attorneys Association! The first TDCAA Victim Services Board was elected at the September, South Padre Island annual seminar. The election was the culmination of a long-range strategic goal to transition the Victim Assistance Coordinator Committee to an elected body. The board was elected with representatives from each of the eight TDCAA regions.

The TDCAA Board of Directors appointed Cyndi Jahn, Director of Victim Services for the Bexar County Criminal District Attorney's Office, as the new VS Board Chair. Cyndi has served that office for 20 years and holds the designation of Certified Legal Assistant and Professional Victim Assistance Coordinator. She manages and coordinates 41 victim advocates within the DA's Office, the largest victim service program of any prosecuting office in the state of Texas.

Laney Dickey, Lamb County & District Attorney Office Victim Assistance Coordinator in Littlefield, was elected to represent Region 1. Laney has been the Lamb County VAC for 18 years and has been certified by TDCAA as a Professional Assistance Coordinator since 2003.

Frank Zubia, the Director of the Victim Assistance Program for the 34th Judicial District Attorney's Office in El Paso, is the new member from Region 2. Frank has been a victim advocate for 11 years and has completed training at the National Victim Assistance Academy's Foundation and Leadership Seminars.

Kathy Dixon is the new Region 3 member. She has served as a victim assistance coordinator for 33rd and

*continued on page 15*

### C.O.P.S.; *continued from page 10*

C.O.P.S. is a national, nonprofit organization with 51 chapters throughout the United States with a membership comprised of more than 15,000 surviving families; and, unfortunately, that membership continues to grow as 140-160 law enforcement officers are killed every year in the line of duty.

Visit [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org) for more information on the organization and the programs offered to America's surviving law enforcement families.



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*The Victim's Informer* is published quarterly and distributed to over 4,500 individuals, state, and national organizations. Articles, meeting notices, and other submissions should be sent to TDCJ-Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd, Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757-6899; faxed to 512-452-1025; emailed to [tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us); or call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

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Texas law requires that TDCJ Victim Services Division request readers to notify us annually, in writing, that they wish to continue receiving *The Victim's Informer*.

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THE

VICTIM'S INFORMER

**OUR GOAL IS TO PRINT NEWS OF INTEREST  
FOR VICTIMS AND VICTIM ADVOCATES**

Angie McCown, Director

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Victim Services Division

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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...

## Law Enforcement Officers

by Loree England

TDCJ Victim Services Division

Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

*Austin Police Department: "Keeping you, your family and the community safe."*

**O**CTOBER 5, Tuesday afternoon, 3:00 pm, I am driving to Southeast Austin to ride along with an APD Metro Response Sergeant on the 3 pm to 1 am shift. Upon arrival at the station I am greeted at the door by the Sergeant who resembles Bruce Willis, bald (by choice) and a little rough and rugged around the edges, but fit. He is dressed in shorts, a t-shirt, and tennis shoes. The Sergeant shows me to his office where I complete a waiver of liability and sign my life away.

Upon entering the room where the Sergeant and other officers have set up shop, he tells the guys to make sure they are dressed then introduces me to the team. I immediately notice their "Wall of Shame" which is a poster made up of pictures of criminals they have dealt with, one of which was a large overweight man in his underwear with drugs stuffed in his belly button as a hiding place. This is their clientele. Each officer has their own personalized cubicle, a few of them are obviously John Wayne fans. All of the officers on this team are male, mostly in their 30's. The officers are educated with most having undergraduate degrees. There are ten officers in all who share this space, including the Sergeant. It's kind of like a man cave thick with testosterone. Will, Joe, Clint, Pete (who totally resembles Jake Gyllenhaal), Woo, Streepy, and Jared (three others who were not on duty) make up one of the two APD Metro Response teams covering south Austin.

Most of the officers were in the process of getting dressed into their uniforms when I arrived, except Streepy. It was his turn to be undercover and he would remain in shorts and a t-shirt for the shift. He needed to be the guy next door, the college student, or anyone else that might fit in and go unnoticed. The Sergeant went to get into his uniform. I spent this time with a crime analyst who works with the department and analyzes crime trends in the area. A day in her life would make for an interesting story. The Sergeant returned in blue complete with safety equipment including his gun, two extra magazines, a taser which shoots up to 25 feet away, a radio, bulletproof vest, expandable baton, two sets of handcuffs, and a flashlight. It was now time for a briefing.

It's 4:00 pm and the first thing to be done on duty is to attend a briefing with the Sergeant, who has the responsibility of supervising the officers. The briefing involves finding out what has been going on in the local area over the last few days, this could include any special operations that are going on and also any targets that have been set for tonight's shift. With the help of an informant, Streepy has just arranged a drug deal. He is going to meet with a guy wearing a white hoodie at the Valero station to buy drugs. The Metro Response Officers are getting briefed by Streepy via a dry erase board. Streepy drew on the dry erase board the station, the main streets, the entrances, and the location of the

drug deal. He drew X's where each officer would be and explained what each officer would do. He told everyone what he wanted to happen. Each move was carefully calculated and planned. Questions were answered and we were off.

The officers exited the building headquarters and went to their vehicles. The Sergeant and I took his car, a slick top which is an unmarked police cruiser with antennas, a spot light, and other accessories which make it resemble a police cruiser. The first thing I noticed were all the gadgets including a radio, camera, GPS, and a mounted computer which separated the drivers side from the passengers side of the front seat. The Sergeant logged in on his computer and showed me where the radio was and the button to push in case of emergency. Two of the officers took another slick-top and two others took the Trojan, a large SUV. Trojan is a term used for a vehicle that contains several officers inside and is also considered a cool car. Streepy took another cool car which is a regular car from a local dealer that is rotated as they are sent off to auction. We all left the substation separately and drove off, ending up in the area of E. Oltorf and Riverside.

It is 5 pm and we are cruising the area. The Sergeant is listening to his team through his ear radio which operates on its own channel. He can also hear dispatchers talking from his other radio and the computer monitor is a constant change of screens of information

on calls and possible responses. Over the radio we heard that the drug deal was going down, the criminal was by gas pump #1, and all cars were in place.

At 5:10 pm, we drove through some mini mall parking area and stopped behind the Valero station. We sat for a minute, then, all of a sudden, took off fast up and through the alley and came to a quick halt in the road at one entrance to the station with the other two vehicles meeting us coming from different directions. I saw Streepy with the guy in the white hoodie. The Sergeant immediately reaches (almost unconsciously) and switches on our red/blue lights. Lights were flashing as the officers got out of their vehicles and surrounded and apprehended the guy in the white hoodie, a young, skinny man of average height. They arrest the man for the offense, using an authorized restraint move to make the arrest. It played out just like the dry erase board diagram.

The officers immediately started trying to find the dope he had come there to sell to Streepy, searching the guy, looking in the bushes. The guy in the white hoodie was also searched for weapons, asked to remove his shoes, handcuffed, and then interviewed. He said that he didn't have any dope and that he was just going to take the money. Sometimes this happens the officers say, more often though, the drug dealer has hidden the dope somewhere nearby and after meeting up with the buyer and getting the cash they take them to the dope and make the deal.

It all happened so fast, this powerful force of men in uniform all coming together at the precise moment. I found it amazing that bystanders looked as they walked or drove by but carried on like it was a normal everyday event. Somewhat routine. My mouth was still hanging open. This sort of activity may no longer get these officers' hearts racing,

but mine sure was. Wow!

This is routine every day work for these Metro Response Officers. Their major focus is to enforce laws prohibiting street level narcotics distribution and use, street level crimes associated with gangs, prostitution and vice-related crimes, recurring patterns of crime (this is where the Crime Analysis Unit comes in), such as serial robbery, burglary, and alcohol violations, city ordinance violations, and traffic laws. Metro Response Officers are not intended to address long-term investigations, such as major narcotics or organized crime investigations that require in-depth investigation and commitment of manpower for over two weeks. Because of this, they work closely with other units such as the Gang Unit, Abatement Unit, and the Asset Forfeiture Unit. The team will back up other APD Patrol Officers as necessary. These officers call Crisis (formerly called Victim Services) when victims are involved. There's more ...

While the guys take the alleged drug dealer to jail we head downtown to APD Headquarters to get the night vision goggles (NVG) for later on. If you are up to no good on a Tuesday night in southeast Austin, look out for the Metro Response Officers. They will find you, even in the dark. After checking out the NVGs we head back to where the drug deal went down. The team had called in the AISD K-9 to check the surrounding areas for drugs, in the bushes, in and around the station, behind the car wash, etc. The K-9 on duty was a cute medium sized, long haired black dog who looked like a mutt with a mission. No drugs were found.

It's now 6:00 pm and the officers have worked up an appetite. The team usually eats together as a group every day. Today we were having Chinese. Ordering a dish that is served in a pineapple, made of tofu, or Mango and sticky rice

in bamboo will drum up a conversation. Yum... After ordering, the conversation is light and they talk about each others families and happenings. The special camaraderie that exists between these officers is evident. They are a close group as their lives are literally at times, in each other's hands. They all laugh and joke and poke a little at each other, especially the ones that get bothered by it. I believe they could all have second jobs as comedians. A healthy sense of humor plays a very important role in such a high stress field and amongst this team. I felt very proud, not to mention pretty special sitting around the table with seven APD Metro Response Officers in uniform. As dinner winds down we have another briefing at the table. The team is setting out to find and apprehend a parole violator, one of the officers will be making some calls to try to locate him.

Meanwhile, we leave the restaurant and drive around Henry sector. This is the name for one of the areas the team patrols. This is a rough part of town, with an excess amount of boarded up apartments. As we drive, the Sergeant is running license plates on his computer, checking for warrants, and possible stolen vehicles. We drive through a couple of seedy hotel parking lots where drug deals are known to go down frequently. The hair on my arms was standing up. Over the radio we hear that two of the officers have pulled someone over. We immediately go to assist the officers. We pull up next to the officers who have pulled over a young man for a traffic violation, they tell us that everything is under control, we drive on. The officers watch each others backs, work as a team, and always have a back up officer nearby. We continue patrolling the areas with high crime rates. We have a little time to talk. I asked the Sergeant why they call Streepy, Streepy? He respond-

*continued on page 14*

ed, "Well that's his name." He sent a few emails to other coworkers, staying informed of what else was going on. It was getting late, so we decided a little caffeine would do us both some good. This required a quick stop at a coffee shop.

After getting our coffee and getting into the cruiser, the sergeant became aware of something going down. All of a sudden we take off high-speed again, its 9:30 pm and now dark. Within a few minutes, we are parked in the street the wrong way at the entrance to an apartment complex, our flashing police lights on. The officers own the streets. The Sergeant jumps out of the cruiser. Two officers had observed a drug deal going down and the two guys involved took off running. After a chase, the two officers arrested one of the men and had him in the back seat of their cruiser. He had just sold someone some dope. The buyer got away. A crowd has gathered to watch the event. The officers show me how the dealer had kept the crack in a magnetic key holder and there was enough residue left to arrest him. They proceed to take him downtown to county jail where he will be booked. The narcotics evidence will be logged and placed in a locker back at their headquarters.

We are back on the street and are cruising around a huge apartment complex known for high crime, drugs, and prostitution. Two officers have pulled their cruiser up to the complex entrance gate where several people were hanging out. The gate was locked so they could not enter. Two people took off running into the complex, one remained. We entered at another entrance and were inside of the complex. The Sergeant locked the car and got out taking his flashlight. One of the officers took off through the complex after the two people, checking apartments for their whereabouts. The one who remained was a known pros-

titute. One of the officers was speaking to the woman in a low tone interviewing her. What most people may not know about this law enforcement team is that they are nice and polite to the people they interview and arrest. These officers have established rapport with these people. After a few questions, the woman takes out two crack rocks hoping to avoid going to jail. She said that they weren't hers and that they belonged to the others but said she did not know the whereabouts of the fleeing people. The woman had willingly given the officers two crack rocks with a street value of approximately \$40.00. The officers took the crack from the prostitute.

The Sergeant speaks highly of his team. He said that his guys were excellent at interviewing. They have the training and experience. They also know what to look for. When they ask if someone has any drugs, the person will unconsciously look at where the drugs are stashed. These are the things they look for. The Sergeant and his team are always aware of their surroundings and have excellent heightened observation skills. They are very in tuned with each other. The Sergeant knows his men and they know him.

We went into the apartment complex, the floors were dirty and stained, and there was a mix of strange odors. Many of the apartments are boarded up by the landlords but often it is in haste as people break into them over and over again. One of the vacant apartments had all of the copper wiring stripped from the furnace and hot water heater unit, the blinds were torn up, the carpet was stained, and trash was strewn about. Drug deals, prostitution anything goes in these vacant boarded up apartments. This is sometimes where the sex happens after the prostitutes get the drugs. Two officers went up to the front door of the prostitute's apartment from whom

they had earlier confiscated the crack. One officer stood on each side of the door. Joe, a large man of imposing presence, banged on the door with his fist. A man inside asked who was there and then let us in. The man opened the door and three more people were inside. The lighting was dim and the apartment was in place but dirty. When tourists come to Austin, they see the Capital, the Hill Country, Town Lake, they don't see this.

The last bust of the night was the most exciting. We meet up behind a church with two of the other officers. They say the day has been typical and nothing out of the ordinary or exciting, maybe a little slow. Meanwhile, Streepy has been watching some suspicious people in a green Cadillac at a local Walgreens. He has a feeling the woman is a prostitute and drugs are somehow involved. He knows what to look for. His training has taught him this skill. He is on to something unlawful and he knows it. We left the church and parked on a nearby road. Streepy has everyone positioned, it has all been set up. Streepy notified us that the Cadillac has just taken off. The Sergeant saw the car coming our way. Right behind them was Streepy, and coming from a different direction were two of the other officers turning to follow Streepy. The green Cadillac came towards us and turned down the street we were on. We did a quick u-turn and took off after them, racing through the back streets. Each car took a different route but all ended up at the same place at the same moment. Plates were being run and we were checking for warrants. After stopping, the Sergeant immediately got out of the car and approached the vehicle which contained three men and one woman. The other officers were in the process of handcuffing them. They were checking IDs and

*continued next page*

### **Officers; continued from page 13**

interviewing each person individually. The officers have found crack cocaine and marijuana. One of the subjects is a fugitive and a person involved in a car accident involving serious bodily injury and detectives wanted his DNA. The officers take two to jail and the other two are released. This team works together like a finely tuned orchestra, each instrument playing their part.

Most folks don't understand what these officers face every day. Not many

people question an alleged drug-addicted prostitute and detain a wanted man in just one day's work. But that's exactly the job of the APD Metro Response Sergeant and his team. Their clients tend to be dope dealers, gang members, or prostitutes, people up to no good. Their shifts are immersed in high speed chases, flashing lights, radios, and ever changing computer screens of incoming calls. They have to be observant and their job is physical. The Sergeant says The Wire

and The Shield are two TV Shows that give the best depiction of what they do everyday.

I feel better with these guys patrolling the area. We need good people out on the streets to serve and protect all of us. Being an APD Metro Response Officer is a hard and dangerous job. I hope to do them justice with this article. Be safe.

*Reviewed by APD Public Information Office for accuracy and publication in The Victim's Informer.*

### **TDCAA; continued from page 11**

424th Judicial Districts in Burnet since 2001. These districts cover Llano, Blanco, and San Saba counties.

Christina Segovia, Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Bee County and District Attorney's Office, is the Region 4 member. She has served victims in that county for nine years.

Nancy Holmes Ghigna, Montgomery County District Attorney's Office Director of Victim Assistance in Conroe, represents Region 5. Nancy has been with the office since 1994 and became Director in 2005. She is certified by TDCAA as a Professional Victim Assistance Coordinator and completed training at the National Victim Assistance Academy. She is also a member of the Texas Crime Victims' Institute Advisory Council.

Jalayne Robinson, Wood County Criminal District Attorney/Victim Assistance Coordinator from Quitman, is the Region 6 member. She has worked for that office since 1991.

Blanca Burciaga, LMSW is the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's office in Fort Worth. She was appointed as the Region 7 representative. She has been with the District Attorney's Office for more than seven years.

Jill (Hargrove) McAfee, Director of Bell County District Attorney's Office

Victim Services is the Region 8 member. She has been with the office since 1986 and served on the TDCAA Victim Assistance Coordinator Committee.

The new board represents a wealth of expertise and demographic diversity which will be utilized in developing standards, policy, and curricula; planning and providing training; and serving as mentors and points of contacts for their regions.

Another of TDCAA's long-range plans was to develop a Victim Services Director position. I am honored to serve as their first Director having moved over from the AG's Office in February. The position is meant to provide a focus on victim services in prosecutor's offices and provide technical assistance and policy guidance.

As some of you know, I've been involved in victim assistance for a very long time, but I have learned so much since taking this new position, especially how the Victim Impact Statement is used in different jurisdictions. Did you know that in some counties the judge allows the victim to read the VIS after a plea is accepted? This is a unique combination of the VIS and allocution and I enjoy the evolution.

I've listened to and been inspired by thousands of people who have been the

victims of violence. I've also gathered many mentors along the way including legendary prosecutors Carol Vance and Johnny Holmes. It was under Carol's leadership that we began the first prosecutor victim assistance program in Texas. Johnny helped me come up with the mission for the Crime Victim Clearinghouse which was to create a central source of referral and training on victim assistance issues for crime victims and those assisting them.

Among the Clearinghouse's first initiatives Under Governor Mark White was to draft legislation for and then implement the Victim Bill of Rights including the Victim Impact Statement. It has been a pleasure to work with TDCJ Victim Services to revise the VIS and reinvigorate training and implementation.

I look forward to working with all you and hearing your innovations and adaptations in victim services and training. Please contact me at [mcdaniel@tdcaa.com](mailto:mcdaniel@tdcaa.com) with your thoughts and suggestions. I am available to help prosecutors, coordinators, and other prosecution staff with procedures, grant information, updates, and solutions.



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## VICTIM'S INFORMER

**Holidays; continued from page 4**

**Remember the Children.** Listen to them. Celebrate them. Children may have deep feelings that can be overlooked if you spend all your time focusing on yourself. Putting up holiday decorations can be a draining emotional experience, but recognize its significance to children. A friend or relative may be happy to help you decorate or purchase and wrap gifts. Also consider shopping on-line as an alternative to the frenzy of mall shopping, but don't try to "buy" your way out of sad feelings.

**Protect Your Health.** Physical and emotional stress can change the chemical balance in your body, reducing the effectiveness of your immune system. Get a flu shot. Eat healthy food and avoid indulging in sweets. Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Take a good multi-vitamin. Get seven to eight hours of sleep each night. Talk with your doctor about an antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication if you think it will help. If you

are unsure about how the medication will affect you, share your concerns with your doctor.

**Utilize Available Resources.** People of faith are encouraged to observe services and rituals offered by their church, synagogue, mosque, or other faith community. Many "veterans of faith" can offer you serenity, a quiet presence, and healing wisdom. The most valuable helper usually is someone who shares a common experience or understands something about what you are going through. Spend as much time as possible with the people you love the most.

Most important, remember that you can't change the past but you can take charge of the present and shape the future. Total recovery may not be possible, but what you make of your trauma is largely up to you.

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This article is summarized from the chapter on Holidays in her book, *No Time for Goodbyes: Coping with Sorrow, Anger, and Injustice After a Tragic Death*.

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