

# The VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

VOL. 17, NO. 1 – MARCH/APRIL 2012

## A Note of Gratitude

by **Angie McCown, Director**

*TDCJ Victim Services Division*

*Beginning with this issue, the Victim's Informer will include a personal message from the Director of the TDCJ Victim Services Division, Angie McCown.*

*Gratitude is the memory of the heart. ~Jean Baptiste Massieu, translated from French*

AS WE BEGIN 2012, I am reminded of the importance of reflecting on the past year before I begin to set goals for the future. There were many challenges for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division in 2011. Some days I felt as though I would arrive at the office with a plan for the day, only to have it interrupted by a challenge or crisis that left me feeling as though all I had done was grab the fire extinguisher and put out fires all day. On those days I often left the office feeling exhausted and hopeless; a feeling that I imagine many victim advocates experience from time to time throughout their careers. I wish I could say that this was the first year that I have ever experienced these feelings or had these thoughts; however that would not be true. I remember one year in particular, while employed as the Victim Services Director at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), three Troopers died in the line of duty in the first five months of the year. I found myself feeling hopeless and questioning why I continued to

work around so much sadness and loss.

One of the lessons I have learned from my work in this field is that we must have peers and mentors we can turn to in times like these. During that difficult year at DPS I turned to one of my peers and mentors, Janice Harris Lord, long-time victim advocate and Texas Board of Criminal Justice Member. From her years of experience, Janice could relate to how I was feeling and she had the wisdom to help me out of hopelessness through gratitude. Janice encouraged me to "practice gratitude". She told me to think of three things I am grateful for just before I fall asleep at night, and then the next morning as I am waking up, before I get out of bed, again think of three things I am grateful for. Janice knows me well, so she cautioned me not to over think it or to try to come up with new things each time, just go with what comes to mind. As I left Janice, I thought to myself, this will never work. However I was desperate, so I made a commitment to try it for a week. Within three days, my hopelessness had lifted and I found myself re-

membering that I chose this profession, and that in all of the sadness and loss it can bring, it can also bring hope. My focus changed to how grateful I am to be a victim advocate and to have learned so many lessons about life and gratitude from the advocates and the victims I have had the privilege to work with.

So, as I reflect on the past year, I am grateful to all of you who stood by us during a challenging year. I am grateful for the leadership and support of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Executive staff and the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. I am grateful for those peers and mentors who have always been there for me. And last but certainly not least, I am grateful for the Victim Services Division staff for their dedication to serving crime victims, criminal justice professionals and concerned citizens. It is with those gifts of gratitude in mind, that I begin to look forward to working with all of you in 2012.★

*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*

*~John Fitzgerald Kennedy*

April is:

---

**Sexual Assault**  
Awareness Month

---

Visit these informative websites to learn more:  
National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
[www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam)  
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault [www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)

# The VICTIM'S INFORMER

## In this issue ...

BPP Victim Liaison  
page 5

New TxCVC Director  
page 6

A Very Special Christmas Tree  
page 7

Calendar  
page 8

Like a Good Neighbor  
page 9

## Grief, Loss, & Addiction: My Path to Healing

by **Cathy Collins**

*Crime Victims Advocate/Senior Intake Specialist, The Christi Center*

**T**HINK BACK TO WHEN you were fifteen years old. Do you remember your first love? Do you remember feeling this person might be your soul mate? When I was fifteen I had few cares or worries. I was in junior high in Austin and I had a boyfriend who was in high school. He was everything to me. He was my world. But this all changed dramatically in a very short period of time. In one day, everything in my life changed; from the way that I saw things, to the way I felt about things. I changed without realizing the pain, and understanding the feelings of grief and loss.

I woke up on a Saturday morning in 1967 to the sound of my telephone ringing. As a teenager, I assumed that it must be one of my girlfriends calling to plan out our normal day. Instead, my friend asked if I had seen the newspaper. I immediately went to get it, and was horrified to see the headline, "Teen Killed at Pig Stand." My boyfriend's name was in the first line of the article. There had been an altercation between two groups of teenagers from different sides of town. My boyfriend had been

shot in the side of his neck and the back of his head. My emotions immediately spiraled downward and I did not want to feel the pain. This would be a major life changing event for me.

It was at this time that I began to experiment with alcohol. Neither of my parents suffered from the disease of alcoholism, but after asking questions later on in life, I realized that other family members did. I remember the first time that I drank alcohol. It made me feel different. It numbed me. I didn't have to think about the brutal death of my boyfriend. I discovered that using alcohol could alter the way I felt. For me, it was a distracting savior; an escape and a way to avoid processing my grief.

I learned to use alcohol to mask the trauma that was deep down inside me from the murder of my boyfriend. I just didn't have to feel the pain. Looking back, I now realize that I was predisposed to alcoholism, and the trauma from the murder of my boyfriend fed the disease. To add to the difficulties I was going through at this time in my life, I chose to view his body. No one

*continued on page 3*

***TDCJ VSD is now offering email notifications in addition to our letter notifications! Email allows for immediate notification via computer, mobile device, or wherever internet access is available. Those already registered with the confidential Victim Notification System (VNS) will soon receive a letter with instructions on how to take advantage of this new notification option.***

had explained to me what happens to the body physically after such a horrific event. He didn't look like himself at all. I remember seeing one of the bullet hole entries by the side of his neck. I will never forget that vision. There were no victim services or counseling available to me. My school had no support groups or anyone I could talk to. I didn't know how to ask my parents to get me help. In fact, they were actually relieved that he would no longer be a problem in their lives. My grades began to suffer and I had a really hard time retaining information. I had a very short attention span, and began to think that I was stupid. I needed help, but was afraid to ask for it.

As with many who suffer with addiction, I began to experiment with other drugs. I felt like I was living my life on the edge and started engaging in very risky behavior. But that deep-seated pain was still there. In order not to "feel" I thought I needed to continue to make bad decisions. I didn't like the person I was becoming as I evolved from a teenager into a young adult. The memory of his murder was always present. It felt like a spark that was waiting to ignite.

In 1974, I married and thought that might change my life for the better. I was sure that I could run from my problems and everything would be fine. However, I was paralyzed in my own emotional growth. I was still very immature in my thinking and how I processed my choices.

Soon I was blessed with four wonderful children, all boys, that learned from a very early age all about pain and loss. Knowing this would bring me to my knees, and a deep dark hole which I could either bury myself in, or begin to

pull myself out of.

In 1990, the unthinkable occurred. My brother was murdered. He was four years older than me and my only sibling. I always looked up to him and loved going to any gathering just to be around him and his friends. Our relationship was a constant in my eyes and I knew that would never change. But it did one late afternoon in January. While I was in the kitchen fixing dinner for my sons, a live broadcast appeared on channel 36 on a small TV that I kept on the counter. That channel was known for its shocking and graphic ambulance chasing stories. As I stood there in my kitchen, I watched the TV and saw my brother's body coming out of his house on a gurney as his name was splashed across the screen in big letters. It was a surreal moment that no one could ever prepare themselves for. There was no proper notification provided to the family. No one from victim services or the police department came out to notify us. Back then, anyone could walk up to a crime scene and say they were a relative and the information about the victim was immediately released to the media.

My brother had been brutally murdered from blows to the back of his head with a hatchet. The suspect had left the weapon in a workshop area with his fingerprints all over it. He then fled to Arkansas and an all states bulletin for information regarding my brother's stolen vehicle and the suspect was issued. This individual had just been released from prison in Florida and was an old friend of my brother. He needed a sponsor in order for him to be allowed to come to Texas and have his parole transferred. My brother agreed to help him out, and it was that gesture of help

that cost him his life. He was eventually apprehended and brought back to Texas. A plea bargain was reached in the case and he was sentenced to 30 years in prison. He has since been up for parole on two different occasions, which always forces me to re-live the murder and the pain surrounding it.

My brother left behind a beautiful 9 year old daughter, as well as four nephews aged 9, 8, 6, and 18 months. Within three years my mother died of cancer, which I believe was brought on by the pain she experienced by the death of her only son. I not only lost my brother, but I lost my mother who was never the same after his murder. My dad passed away suddenly three years after my mother's death. I divorced after seventeen years of marriage. Everything again had changed and I was very scared and didn't know if I would be able to survive.

It was at this time that the feelings from the initial loss of my first boyfriend began to resurface. It was like I was re-living his murder all over again. I felt like no one could understand what had happened to our family and I was so scared that something would happen to one of my children. Once again, my addiction was there to comfort me and I knew it would never leave me. Only this time it wasn't working and I began to feel like I was going crazy.

One of the most wonderful blessings that I was given was a referral by Austin Police Department Victim Services for my family to a grief group called "For the Love of Christi." That was my saving grace in so many ways. We were embraced by Susan and Don Cox who understood exactly where our pain was coming from. Their 20-year-old daughter, Christi, had been

*continued on page 4*

killed in downtown Austin by a drunk driver in 1985. Motivated by the sorrow and pain they suffered from their loss, they wanted to find a way to honor Christi. They were meeting with many individuals who had lost loved ones to different types of loss and just needed a place to go and talk. The bottom line was that they all suffered from a broken heart and the missing of a loved one. At the Christi Center, people were able to come back and tell their story over and over again.

My healing began nine months after my brother's murder. My life had no where else to go. I had hit bottom and I could not let my life continue with the many issues I had masked for so many years. I chose to stop the addictions and do what people advised me to do. I would now talk and open up about my life's story without the shame or embarrassment I once felt. I listened, and began to rediscover the injured young teenage girl and decided that it was time to let her heal. I wanted to be a great mom to my boys and be present for everything they accomplished in their lives. No more altering my feelings and emotions with alcohol or other substances. I began finding new tools for living that would encourage me to be the best at whatever I did. I also started finding strength in others and began to understand that I had a purpose in life, which was something I had not felt before. After experiencing the most traumatic events imaginable, I came to an amazing conclusion; I realized that I was a survivor. I was surrounded by so much support from my Alcoholics Anonymous family and the Christi Center. I am so happy to say that I will be celebrating 22 years of sobriety this year.

It is at this time that my life started having direction. The many obstacles and challenges that had occurred in my life resulted in me having a new revelation on what I wanted to do with my life. I started volunteering at the Christi Center. Susan Cox became my mentor. I listened and learned everything I could about loss and grief. She and Don gave me wings to feel confident in what I was doing with the new life I was given. I began doing victim impact panels, working with kids, teenagers, crime victims and individuals who had lost a parent or a sibling. I loved what I was doing and was able to begin to give back what I had received from the support networks that were now an important part of my life.

This newfound confidence and motivation spurred me to go back to school for my License Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) license. I felt a very close connection with people who used a substance to mask their pain. I understood that it could take them down a deadly path. I began as a volunteer at the Christi Center doing weekly meetings for men who had been released from prison. Each one of these men had suffered from some form of addiction. I wanted to share my journey with them and also let them know that I was a crime victim. I wanted them to recognize that when you lose someone to a violent crime, it can often be stuffed deep down inside and that it needs to be acknowledged. I began seeing that some of these men were getting it and were able to understand why they had made bad decisions and choices in their lives. This was very rewarding for me. Many of these individuals continued to come to our regular meetings when they finished their programs. I always

advised them to go not only to their Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Cocaine Anonymous meetings, but to get as much help as possible and find a way to deal with their loss.

I eventually had the opportunity to come onboard at the Christi Center on a part-time basis. It was a golden opportunity for me and I was so excited everyday I went to work. I know that some people thought that working with loss and grief would be awful, but I didn't. The Christi Center began serving more crime victims, and I suggested having a crime victims meeting twice a month. These meetings were a huge success and I began to get referrals from the Austin Police Department, Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's office, the Department of Public Safety, the FBI, and other agencies surrounding Central Texas. I began putting together crime victim panels for training purposes for various agencies. I also began partnering with other people who worked with crime victims. One of those people was Verna Lee Carr, an advocate with People Against Violent Crime (PAVC). She taught me everything I needed to know about the criminal justice system. We began working on cases together and she soon became a dear friend. I am fortunate to consider her another mentor in my life.

So many people in recovery programs have been impacted by some type of crime themselves. I wanted to reach out and work with these people since I feel so strongly about my own recovery. I began facilitating meetings at the Women's Inpatient Program at Austin Recovery with a program called "Grief, Loss and Addiction." I was then

*continued on page 5*

asked to do monthly meetings at the Austin Recovery's Men's Outpatient program. I have presented at many conferences about this important piece of recovery. I have also been providing services to teen groups for the past four years. One group is for teens with loss (many which are crime and drug related) and the second is for teens whose parents are incarcerated. This gives me

a platform to work with each group and help them learn to deal with their feelings in a healthy way.

The most important thing I have learned in life is that often the worst events that occur can become the strengths that carry us forward. I have received so much in my life and strive to give back to others that have experienced some of the same challenges that

I had to grow from. I now have good self-help tools which allow me to do the work I do. Being healthy mentally, physically and spiritually are the foundations for healing and growth from any circumstance.★

*If you would like to know more about the services offered at the Christi Center, please visit their website at: <http://forthe loveofchristi.org/services/>*

# Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Victim Liaison: David Gutierrez

**by Lauren Reynolds**

*TDCJ Victim Services; Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse*

The seven appointed members of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) stay consistently busy reviewing offender files and correspondence, from which they decide if offenders are granted their parole. Members also attempt to consider the requests on level of supervision and conditions of parole from victims and family members on both sides of the crime. It is no doubt a never-ending job; one of extreme importance and responsibility.

In 2009, Texas Governor Rick Perry appointed David G. Gutierrez to the BPP. Mr. Gutierrez brings to the Board over 30 years of experience in the criminal justice system. Mr. Gutierrez began his career in law enforcement in 1977 with the Lubbock County Sheriff's Office. He began in the Jail and then transferred to the Patrol Division. From there, Mr. Gutierrez promoted through numerous other divisions. He worked his way up to Captain, Chief Administrator, Assistant Chief Deputy

and then Chief Deputy, before being elected the Sheriff of Lubbock County in 1998. Sheriff Gutierrez resigned his position as Sheriff in 2009 to accept the appointment of Governor Perry.

Throughout his law enforcement career, Mr. Gutierrez also served as Chair of TCOOMMI, Texas Correctional Office of Offender's with Medical and Mental Impairments and Chair of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards.

He has received numerous prestigious recognitions such as the Attorney General's Outstanding Service & Leadership to State of Texas Award (1992), the Distinguished Leadership Alumni Award from his alma mater Wayland Baptist University (1999) and the Excellence in Outstanding Law Enforcement Award by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 2006 for a three year search for a missing 16 year old girl.

He has previously served on the boards of many important organiza-



tions such as the United Way of Lubbock, Texas Jail Association, Texas Corrections Association, Boys and Girls Club, South Plains Boys Scout Council, Highland Medical Center, Hospice of Lubbock, Assist Human Needs, Inc and various others.

Since becoming a BPP board member, Mr. Gutierrez has expressed a continued enthusiasm, interest and concern for victims and victim rights. Mr. Gutierrez served on the TDCJ-Victim Services Division 2011 Victim Impact Statement Revision Committee and attended last year's Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) conference. Mr. Gutierrez shows great passion for filling the role of a victim liaison for the BPP.

Board Member Gutierrez may be contacted at the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, Gatesville Board Office.★

# New Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) Director

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is excited to announce the selection of the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) Director, Erica Linneman. Erica started on January 3rd and has been busy familiarizing herself with her vast array of job duties. I decided to ask her a few questions in order to introduce her to our readers. Please take the opportunity to give Erica a warm welcome to the TxCVC.

## by Kristi Heiman

TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

**Q:** Name

**A:** Erica Linneman

**Q:** Title

**A:** Program Supervisor III (aka: Clearinghouse Director)

**Q:** Can you please tell us about your background in victim services?

**A:** I began my career in Victim Services at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office as a Victim/Witness Coordinator in the Juvenile Court Unit. I provided direct services to crime victims and coordinated communication efforts between the myriad players involved in the prosecution process. Initially I worked solely on cases with victims and witnesses of juvenile offenders, but eventually transitioned to cases involving adult offenders and juvenile victims or witnesses. While at the DA's Office, I served for several years as a training consultant for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's statewide New Victim Service Provider Orientation Training, and was an active member of the Youth Aid Panel, and the Philadelphia Coalition for Victim Advocacy.

My eight years with the DA's Office came to an end when my husband ac-

cepted a position requiring our relocation to Austin. For the past 2 ½ years I worked as a Criminal Justice Planner at Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) providing technical assistance to grantees of criminal justice-related programs, elected officials, and other stakeholders within the ten county CAPCOG region; as well as assisting in the development and facilitation of grant training and grant management workshops.

**Q:** What ideas do you have for the future of the TxCVC?

**A:** It is my hope that the TxCVC can expand and enhance the services we provide to continue to meet the needs of victims and victim service providers. I envision the TxCVC serving as *the* central source of information and training about services and issues involving crime victims in Texas. The addition of three new grant funded Regional Victim Service Coordinators (RVSC) will enable the TxCVC to branch out and establish relationships with local victim assistance coordinators in district and county attorneys' offices, local county and state law enforcement, victim advocates, and regional coalitions and task-force groups, in areas of the

state where our ability to provide training and assistance has been hampered by distance.

**Q:** If you had only one word to describe yourself, what would it be?

**A:** Loyal.

**Q:** What makes you look forward to coming to work everyday?

**A:** The people. I have been extremely fortunate to have worked with so many wonderful people over the years. Victim Services attracts such kind and generous people and I have benefitted so much from their dedication and desire to make a difference in their communities.

**Q:** What are your hobbies?

**A:** Food! I love talking about it, reading about it, and thinking about it. My husband jokes that while I am in the midst of eating one meal I am talking about and planning the next one!

**Q:** How do you prefer to be contacted?

**A:** I can be contacted via email at [Erica.Linneman@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:Erica.Linneman@tdcj.state.tx.us) or telephone 512.406.5915. ★



# A Very Special Christmas Tree

**by Dorian de Wind, Retired U.S. Air Force Officer  
and writer**

*Huffington Post Online Newspaper; Posted December 13, 2011;  
Reprinted with permission of Dorian de Wind*

As we have done for the past 16 years, my wife and I brave the unseasonably cold Austin, Texas weather to attend a ceremony that has now become a tradition, albeit a sad one, in our lives: the Tree of Angels ceremony at a local church.

Every year for the past 20 years, a wonderful organization, People Against Violent Crime, has provided a most reverent and appropriate forum for the families and friends of victims of violent crime, and some of the surviving victims themselves, to join together to place their angels -- each representing a loved one who became a victim of violent crime -- on the Tree of Angels.

The Tree of Angels has become a sacred place for so many of us to remember, to pray, to regain or reinforce our faith.

I say "many of us" because I also place an angel on the Tree in memory of our mother who was suddenly and cruelly taken away from us 22 years ago.

Knowing the sorrow of such a tragedy, as loving, sometimes trembling hands carefully place their angel on the tree in our beautiful church, I always wonder what tragic event, what unspeakable acts have prompted others to place their angel next to mine on this

lovely tree.

Some of the angels are very ornate, some simple. There are crystal angels, golden angels and silver angels, large and tiny angels. Some have beautiful poems inscribed on them, some just simple words such as "We love you, Grandma," or "We miss you, Son." But all angels represent the same love, sorrow and almost unbearable sense of loss.

The angels are brought to the tree by men and women, by the young and the old. One little boy placing his angel on the Tree catches my attention. After the ceremony I talk to his mother. She tells me that Jeffrey Rosales' father was killed by a drunk driver, three-and-a-half years ago. Jeffrey is now only six and handling it well. His mother says, "I know Jeffrey's dad would have been so proud of how strong Jeffrey was at the lighting of the Tree of Angels tonight."

After tenderly placing an angel on the tree, tearful eyes look at the angel one more time, remember one more time, and pray and hope one more time before the owner slowly and sorrowfully returns to his or her pew while the choir keeps singing beautiful, haunting melodies that muffle the occasional sob.



And so it goes on for almost an hour. Three years ago a second tree had to be added, there were so many angels. Tonight, both trees are almost full -- hardly a space remains. A sign of the times?

There is a third tree at the other side of the altar, a nicely decorated tree, a "real" Christmas tree. That tree should be a reminder of the "season to be joyous." But this night it is a poignant reminder of yet one more Christmas that many of us will spend without the company, love and joy of a cherished son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or, as in the case of much-too-young Jeffrey, a loved father.

However, partly because of this tree and because of the angels on the tree, those of us who have lost so much, so suddenly and so cruelly, can walk outside into the cold December night and begin to feel a warm glow in our hearts and can dare to hope again. ✨

# calendar



---

## March 15-16, 2012

Domestic Violence Danger Assessment and Risk Management Training Conference

Crowne Plaza Riverwalk Hotel  
San Antonio, Texas

<http://conferences.bwjp.org/conferencedetail.aspx?confid=53>

---

## March 19-20, 2012

Annual Conference on the Prevention of Child Abuse

Westin Galleria Houston  
Houston, Texas

<http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org/nextconference.html?id=g7oAAyvR>

---

## March 26-28, 2012

Conference on Crimes Against Women

Sheraton Hotel Downtown Dallas  
Dallas, Texas

<http://conferencecaw.org>

---

## April 13, 2012

Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV)'s Annual Battering Intervention and Prevention (BIPP) State-wide Conference

Hilton Garden Inn  
Austin, Texas

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

---

## April 14, 2012

Preventing Child Abuse One Child At A Time: Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse

Bethany Lutheran Church  
Austin, Texas

[http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org/austin\\_day\\_care\\_4-14-12.html](http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org/austin_day_care_4-14-12.html)

---

## April 22-28, 2012

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>

---

## April 28, 2012

Annual 5K Walk Like MADD

Statewide, Texas

<http://www.madd.org/>

---

## May 1-4, 2012

13th Annual Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) Conference

Sheraton Gunter Hotel  
San Antonio, Texas

<http://www.txvsa.org>

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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

*The Victim's Informer* newsletter is published quarterly. 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 512-452-0825; or e-mailed to [tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us). For questions or comments, please call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

#### Please Note:

You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD Internet website. If you wish, we will notify you via e-mail each time *The Victim's Informer* becomes available on the TDCJ VSD Internet website and provide an electronic link to *The Victim's Informer*. Send your e-mail address to: [tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.state.tx.us)

Angie McCown, Director  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
Victim Services Division  
[victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us](mailto:victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us)  
8712 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 265,  
Austin, Texas 78757

# Like a Good Neighbor...

## Grant allows TDCJ-Victim Services Division to expand services

### by Lauren Reynolds

*TDCJ Victim Services; Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse*

Last year, the TDCJ Victim Services Division (VSD) received approval for a grant through the Office of the Attorney General. The grant enables the VSD to address the unmet needs of crime victims by increasing their access to the division's services with three strategically placed Regional Victim Service Coordinators (RVSC) – in Dallas, Midland and Corpus Christi. The grant provides the necessary funding for our office to create and staff the three new RVSC during fiscal years 2012 and 2013. The three positions were created out of a desire for our agency to become more accessible and available to victims, victim advocates and criminal justice professionals. The three locations will each service a region of Texas; the RVSC in Corpus Christi will cover south Texas, the RVSC in Midland will serve the panhandle and west Texas and the Dallas RVSC will be available for those in the DFW area and east Texas. Each office is located within a Parole Division Reentry Center where the RVSC will provide direct victim services for their region. Some

of the services that will be provided include:

- Assisting victims with registering with SAVIN/VINE and TDCJ VSD Victim Notification System;
- Assistance with the Victim Impact Statement;
- Assisting victims with Crime Victim Compensation applications;
- Parole Board Accompaniment;
- Preparing victims and accompanying them to Victim Impact Panels;
- Providing information and referrals; and
- Provide training to victim service and criminal justice professionals.

The implementation of this grant will enable TDCJ VSD to increase knowledge within local communities of the rights and services available to victims of crime. We hope that by providing victims with the opportunity to meet in person with a RVSC, their understanding of the criminal justice system will increase and will result in creating a stronger voice for victim's rights in Texas.★

## 2012 National Crime Victims' Rights Week: April 22-28



Visit <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/> to learn more and discover how to honor this event in your community