

Balancing the Scales

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- JANUARY 10, 2007
11:00-1:00
MGCVC DAY ON THE HILL
MN CAPITOL ROTUNDA
- FEBRUARY 14, 2007
10:00-12:00
BOARD MEETING
ST. CLOUD

National Stalking Awareness Month

Know the Dangers of Stalking

After dating her boyfriend for a year, Paula, a college sophomore, ended the relationship. He started calling that night—every hour—begging her to come back. E-mails flooded her in-box, flowers and gifts regularly appeared at her door, and her answering machine filled up with messages. Her ex-boyfriend kept showing up outside her dorm, her classrooms, and the library—everywhere she went. She warned him to stay away and told others that he was “annoying” her. Her friends warned her to be careful, but she did not report these events to the police. One night as she was leaving the library, her ex-boyfriend grabbed her, dragged her behind the building, and shot her. Paula’s life was over at age nineteen.



1,006,970 women and 370,990 men are stalked annually in the U.S.

1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men will be stalked in their lifetime.

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MGCVC MEMBER PROFILES:

JAUNITA RASMUSSEN, NORMAN COUNTY VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Beginning in 2007, MGCVC will profile a member in an effort to further assist in the networking of service providers throughout the State of Minnesota and to provide further guidance as to how other individuals across the state are promoting rights and services for victims of crime.

Simply speaking, Jaunita Rasmussen has “finally found a niche in life.” As the youngest of seven girls, Jaunita married at the tender age of 16, and found herself in the treacherous waters of an abusive relationship. After five years of marriage, she sought a divorce and struggled for custody of her children due to an inability to secure stable housing. After 10 months without, Jaunita was awarded custody of her two children. Ever thankful to the guidance and wisdom of a victim advocate, Jaunita battled through low self-esteem, anger, and depression,

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National Stalking Awareness Month Continued...

Most people associate stalking with celebrities—Madonna, Sheryl Crow, or Britney Spears. Yet celebrity stalking cases, though dangerous and serious, are relatively rare. More commonly, victims are ordinary people pursued by someone they know. Victims may not understand that stalking is criminal. And what they don't know about stalking may jeopardize their lives.

Stalking is a crime. All 50 states have passed laws that make it illegal to engage in stalking—usually defined as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause “a reasonable person” (in legal terms) to feel fear. Stalking behavior can range from annoying and intrusive to terrifying and dangerous. Stalking can escalate to violence and frequently ends in murder. Three out of four women killed by their intimate partners were stalked by that partner before they were killed.

Stalking is shockingly common. More than one million women and 370,000 men are stalked every year in the United States. About one in 12 women and one in 45 men are stalked sometime in their lifetimes.

Stalking can dominate and devastate victims' lives. Victims may feel unsafe and vulnerable, in constant fear of what their stalker might do. They may have trouble working, eating, or sleeping; some victims suffer disturbing flashbacks and nightmares. Victims may also feel isolated and frustrated because people do not understand why they are so afraid. They are caught—for two years, on average—in a threatening trap set by their stalkers.

Stalkers are not easy to identify. They come from virtually every walk of life and every socioeconomic background. They have no single psychological profile, and the differences among stalkers make it hard to predict their behavior and find effective strategies to deter them. The vast majority are obsessed with their victims, intent on controlling them, and determined to use any available means to keep their victims in their power.

Particularly threatening to victims is stalkers' increasing use of high-tech devices to stalk. In recent years, many stalkers have used computer and communications technology to increase their power over their victims. They use global positioning systems (GPS), miniature video cameras, listening devices, and “spyware” (secretly installed software that records every keystroke) to track their victims and secretly invade their lives. Such devices allow stalkers to control their victims and successfully evade law enforcement.

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FIGHTING BACK

To defeat stalkers, both victims and communities must take stalking seriously. Victims should trust their instincts and understand that stalkers are unpredictable and dangerous. Victims in imminent danger should call 911. They should also receive support from crisis hotlines and victim service agencies. These agencies can help victims devise a safety plan, learn about local laws, find services, and take additional steps, such as seeking a protective order.

Victims should report the stalking to law enforcement and carefully document evidence by writing down the times, dates, and places they are stalked. They should keep e-mails, phone messages, letters, notes, and anything sent by the stalker. Victims should also alert friends, family members, roommates, and co-workers about the stalking and enlist their support and help.

For more information about stalking, visit the National Center for Victims of Crime- Stalking Resource Center at www.ncvc.org/src.

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to find herself on the road to healthy thinking and the belief that she has worth and value. She obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice, completing the four-year program in two calendar years. She served as a probation officer for a little over 3 years, suffered through odd jobs for another 3 years, and then applied for her current position as the sole employee of the Norman County Victim Assistance Program. She describes, "I know that this is where I am supposed to be for however long the position is available to me." Although there are times that she feels "completely helpless", she finds joy in "knowing that I helped a person through their journey and walked beside the so that they don't have to go it alone."

The Norman County Victim Assistance Program serves the residents of Norman County, approximately 7400, in

the area of Sexual Assault, Domestic Assault, and General Crime. In the past 16 months, Jaunita has seen an increase in the area of sexual assault, although one can never gauge whether this is the result of an increase in crime or an increase in reporting. She cites her greatest accomplishment thus far as the realization that the community has begun to understand victim's concerns and have demonstrated more sensitivity and understanding to such. She was able to present a resolution to the County Board to recognize April 23-26, 2006 as Crime Victims

Rights Week, and through awareness efforts have seen an increase in donations from the One Fund Drive.

In times of trouble, Jaunita finds her greatest resources to be her peers, especially those in the

Ninth Judicial District. Her hope is that she could "work myself

out of a job", but realistically strives for greater awareness. Specifically, she hopes for the day that she can have a booth at a fair or community event and it not be considered "taboo" to walk by or ask questions. Finally, she hopes for victim to be able to become survivor's without having to go it alone or without being shunned by their communities.

On a personal note, Jaunita has remarried to a man she describes as "loving, unassuming, and incredibly gentle." During her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and children, reading, working on crafts, and, in the rare event that she has the time or energy to go out, she loves to dance. She lives by the standard that one should not judge the decisions people make or criticize them for who they are or how they cope. As she describes standards for both her personal and professional life, "Sometimes you just have to shut your mouth and listen."

NEW LOCATION IN FEBRUARY '07!

Norman County Victim Assistance Program

16 E. 3rd Avenue, Suite
#101B

Ada, MN 56510
(218) 784-3312

ncvap@co.norman.mn.us

Minnesota General Crime Victim Coalition

2332 Lexington Avenue North
Roseville, MN 55113

Phone: (612) 940-8090
Website: www.mgcvc.com
Email: ed@mgcvc.com

We're On the Web!!
www.mgcvc.com

**DO YOU HAVE UNUSED
RESOURCES??**

MGCVC is looking to expand our resource library, and asks that members forward on any unused resources or duplicates they may have lying around.

These resources may be of great value to our membership!

MGCVC EXISTS TO HELP!

In the early 1990's, several crime victim service providers around the state began meeting informally for the purpose of providing support and to share knowledge and resources with each other. Fro this group of dedicated individuals, the need was identified to become more organized in their efforts. Out of this need, the Minnesota General Crime Victim Coalition was born and was incorporated in 1993. For the first years, MGCVC operated only with volunteer help, then in 1998 an Executive Director was hired. Today's membership includes around 70 members from all areas of victim services: community-based programs, law enforcement, prosecution, and probation agencies. We are working together by "joining hands across Minnesota" to better assist victims and further their rights statewide.

Minnesota General Crime Victim Coalition
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