



Montgomery County Family Justice Center

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

SPECIAL POINT OF INTEREST:

MCFJC SHARES
INNOVATIVE
PRACTICE AT
INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

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From the Desk of County Executive, Isiah Leggett

Two years ago, I was pleased to acknowledge your significant contributions to the community, especially to victims of domestic violence. Once again, I express my extreme gratitude for the services that you provide to some of our most vulnerable citizens seeking support and safe haven to free themselves from partner violence and abuse. I am also comforted by your *Safe Start Kids* program which offers support to child witnesses and victims of domestic abuse. The FJC served more than 3,700 victims -- an extraordinary number.

One of my top priorities when I took office was to raise the awareness of teen dating violence. To that end, I was gratified that you held your 3rd "Choose Respect" conference. It is imperative that we send the message that teen dating violence demonstrates the "distress and ambivalence a victim of teen-dating-abuse experiences, as well as the effectiveness of an unrelenting peer who is there to help the victim navigate her way out of a relationship."

I would like to congratulate Circuit Court Judge Louise Scrivener, Sheriff Darren Popkin, Hannah Sassoon, and Jo Ann Ricchiuti for having been chosen to lead a workshop at the recent "Coming Together to Change the World" conference conducted by the Family Justice Center Alliance. Their selection is testimony to the accomplishments of

the FJC in such a short period of time. I offer kudos to them and the entire staff at FJC. Clearly, the rest of the country has come to recognize the extraordinary work that is being performed at the Montgomery County FJC.

Of particular interest is your video conference *pilot program* for



The Montgomery County Family Justice Center is centrally located in the heart of Rockville, Maryland.

video teleconferencing. I have been concerned about the requirement for victims seeking ex-parte orders having to present their case in a courtroom immediately after the event which brought them to the FJC. For those unfamiliar with courtrooms, this can be a traumatic experience. The victim has already been traumatized and this stress simply adds to their fears. I am impressed by the fact that this makes the courts more accessible and increases victim safety, while simultaneously providing the victim with much-needed services.

In April 2010, I noted the tremendous amount of public/private collaboration between the FJC and

its private partners. It is in that spirit that I wish to express my gratitude to Verizon. Not only did they co-sponsor the "Choose Respect" conference, but their contributions provided the funding to implement video conferencing. I would like to again recognize the significant contributions made by GEICO Philanthropic and Kaiser Permanente. Without our private sector partners, it is unlikely that we could have made such great strides!

Finally I would like to recognize the work of Tom DeGonia, President of the FJC Foundation, and Resa Levy, Executive Director. Without the FJC Foundation's key role of providing funding, the FJC would have a difficult time providing all of its services. Congratulations also go to this year's Foundation awardees: Sen. Barbara Mikulski receiving the MCFJC Foundation's Forerunner Award; Laura Chase, Deputy State's Attorney being named the FJC's Inspiring Leader; and, Dorothy Lennig, Esq., for her Founders Award. These three represent the best of the best. The Foundation has done well in recognizing their efforts.

On behalf of my wife, Catherine, and myself, I would like to express our most sincere thanks for all the superb work that you do.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett

County Executive

A Week on the Mississippi



The Montgomery County delegation presenting on video conferencing from L to R: Jo Ann Ricchiuti, Hannah Sassoon and Judge Louise Scrivener.

Seizing the opportunity to visit N’awlins, Bourbon Street and the great Mississippi River as the tall ships arrived, Sheriff Popkin, Judge Louise Scrivener, Jo Ann Ricchiuti and Hannah Sassoon accepted an invitation from the Family Justice Center Alliance to present a workshop on the Montgomery County FJC video conferencing pilot project at its annual conference. Held April 16-19, the conference brought together communities with existing Centers as well as those seeking to establish Centers. This year’s conference was attended by nearly 500

people from the U.S. and around the world. The workshop “Innovative Court Practices at Family Justice Centers” included a panel discussion led by Judge Scrivener and featured a mock ex-parte protective order hearing, filmed from the judge’s bench.

The goal of a video link between Justice Centers and the courts is to increase victim safety and to make the courts more accessible to victims. Additional benefits are to allow petitioners an opportunity to access other services if there is a wait time for a hearing and to permit the children

to play in a child friendly, safe environment – a benefit to the court as well as to the children.

Attendees were particularly interested in the process for collaborating with the judiciary, identifying community partners, technology, funding (!) and the challenges Montgomery County encountered in implementing the pilot project. It was a packed room which generated a lot of excitement and questions from the attendees. The Maryland judiciary and Montgomery County have good reason to be proud of this innovative practice.

Choose Respect Mntgomery

Teen Dating Conference and Public Service Announcement Contest



Above: Councilmembers Hans Riemer, Nancy Floreen and Phil Andrews with conference participants. Right: Holloway Youth Project actors portray realistic scene of teen dating abuse.



“Getting involved to help a friend can make a difference,” and “You can talk to a trusted adult when you witness dating violence,” were two responses from a twelve year-old girl and thirteen year-old boy respectively as they reflected on what they had learned at the 3rd Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Conference. The conference, sponsored by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), Verizon

Wireless and the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College and numerous Montgomery County agencies and groups, is organized to promote respect in dating relationships and raise the community’s awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence. Additionally, since everyone has a role to play in creating a safe, violence free community, this year’s conference also included a special focus on how to intervene to stop

teen dating violence and not be just a bystander.

Organizers were very pleased that more than 160 teens, parents, educators, youth service providers and public officials took the time from their weekend schedules to attend the half day conference. The conference opened with an energetic welcoming from our emcee, Hot 99.5 DJ Toby Knapp, followed by a **(Continued to page 6)**

UMD Internship Program

Internships throughout college tend to be one of the best ways to prepare students for “the real world.” As an undergraduate Family Science major, I was not particularly thrilled to learn that in order to graduate I needed to complete a 120 hour internship and attend a weekly class. However, now coming up on my one year graduation anniversary and being a part of ‘the real world’ I could not be any-

more grateful for that internship requirement. It proved to be a great tool that helped prepare me to be successful in my field of study after graduation. The workshops scheduled throughout the semester are all closely related to the major and the kind of positions a student within the Family Science major could obtain. The workshops ranged from how to be a successful interviewee during a job interview to how to avoid burn out and healthy ways to release

stress. For me, the connection between the UMD internship program and my internship site became something much more than just a 3-credit course requirement. I will never forget my first month as an intern at the Family Justice Center and how working first hand with clients allowed me to better understand and appreciate the concepts covered in the internship workshops. For once, what I was learning in a classroom was **(Continued to page 6)**



Contributing writer, Zulma Medrano with Testudo at the University of Maryland.

Volunteers Provide Invaluable Support and Service to Victims

The volunteer program has been an integral part of the Abused Persons Program (APP) since its inception. When I joined the agency 11 years ago, I found an established and dedicated group. Over the years many volunteers came and went but one thing continues to stay the same, their support and dedication to the victims and the agency. Established in 1977 the agency quickly realized that in order to carry out its mission it needed the support of the community. Volunteers were recruited and assigned many tasks among which were to transport victims back and forth to court, accompany clients into the courtroom and later on when the Administrative judge offered an office at the courthouse they staffed the District Court office throughout the week. Clients who come to the courthouse tend to be nervous, scared and unsure about the legal system. The volunteers help them navigate the process, provide emotional support when they speak to the judges, advocate with court personnel on their behalf. When clients

call the agency for the first time, that first contact is of special significance. When victims hear a companionate and supportive voice, they gain courage to take the next step towards safety.



Contributing writer and APP Staff Vivian Levi (center) with APP Volunteers Judy Whiton and Linda Summers

Today the agency enjoys the support of 25 volunteers. Their tasks have further diversified. Some continue to help at the court and others now help staff our intake line. One volunteer, Sylvia, comes faithfully twice a week to help with filing, data entry and statistics. Volunteer interns provide clinical services such as intake assessments, group and individual counseling.

Some volunteers have been with us for over 20 years and others continue to give endless support and generosity to the clients and the staff. This

year alone volunteers have donated 2,845 hours to the agency. This translates to \$42,675 and is an equivalent of a full time staff person. In so many words these numbers demonstrate the invaluable help they give to us and to victims.

APP recruits its new volunteers every year. Intensive trainings are scheduled in the Fall and Spring followed by shadowing in court and at the office.

I recently read a Middle Eastern Legend that I find representative of this small and dedicated group. The legend is as follows:

A spindly little sparrow is lying on his back in the middle of the road. A horseman comes by, dismounts and asks the sparrow what he's doing lying upside down like that. "I heard the heavens are going to fall today," said the sparrow. "Oh," said the horseman, "and I suppose your spindly little legs can hold up the heavens." "One does what one can," said the sparrow. "One does what one can!"



APP Volunteers L to R: Sandy Blank, Marnie Craven and Jean Clarren

FJC Update:
 Since the Grand Opening 3700 domestic violence clients representing 100 different countries of origin have received services at the FJC.

In Recognition of Exceptional Dedication and Service to Victims The Governor's Victim Assistant Award 2012

On Friday, May 4, 2012 the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention recognized the outstanding work of Detective Paula Hamill in the Montgomery County Police Department's Major Crimes Division. Her teamwork and collaboration with the Family Justice Center, along with her hard work on a daily basis demonstrate how she is a stellar example of an officer who goes above and beyond what is routinely required throughout her law enforcement career.

The Family Justice Center has at least one police officer from the Montgomery County Police Department assigned to the center to investigate domestic violence assaults. However,

sometimes there are cases that include several different criminal offenses which might require the investigative work of a detective from a different division. Detective Hamill works for the Major Crimes Division which is also often referred to as the Homicide/Sex Division. There have been many times that the Family Justice Center has called upon this division for their expertise and investigative skills when a case requires it. In keeping with the "one-stop shop" tradition of the Family Justice Center, detectives are willing to come to the Family Justice Center to meet with clients and to take statements. Detective Hamill has responded to the Family Justice Center on many occasions to meet with clients no matter what time of day.

One late afternoon a client came to the FJC with her children accompanied by her own father. She was referred here by a case worker because she and her children were being abused. Upon meeting with FJC staff, alarming information was revealed regarding severe sexual and physical abuse of the client and ongoing physical abuse of the children that she had not disclosed to anyone before. The State's Attorney's Office stepped in quickly and contacted Detective Hamill. She paid no mind to the fact that it was late in the afternoon on a Friday and dropped what she was doing to respond directly **(Continued to page 6)**



Family Justice Center Foundation News

FJC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS

- Resa Levy
Executive Director
- Thomas M. DeGonia II
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- Maura Lynch
Vice President and
Secretary
- Dorothy Fait
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- Marilyn Bagel
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- The Honorable
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- The Honorable
Ida G. Ruben
- The Honorable
Duchy Trachtenberg

From the Desk of the Executive Director Resa Levy



Resa Levy
MCFJC Foundation
Executive Director

Family Justice Centers ...An International Movement

As I was recently reminded when I attended the 12th Annual International Family Justice Center Conference "Coming Together to Change the World" held in New Orleans this past April, the Family Justice Center concept, considered "best practices" in the handling of domestic violence cases, is now an international movement with more than 70 such centers world-wide. Centers are established throughout the U.S., as well as in England, Canada, Mexico, Jordan and Sweden.

Additionally, there is also a European Movement that includes the establishment of six pilot programs in as many countries. While not all FJC's are the same, all have the core concept of a co-location of multi-disciplinary services thereby providing a one-stop shop approach to the handling of cases of domestic violence.

The Conference focused on leadership, guiding principles and promising practices in the rapidly evolving national and international movement. Workshops

included practical hands-on training and education. Representatives from law enforcement, prosecutors, attorneys, judges, counselors, policy makers, crisis workers, victims, elected officials, and others interested in the Family Justice Center movement were in attendance.

We should all feel a sense of pride in knowing that our Montgomery County Family Justice Center is considered one of the finest centers in existence. In just three short years since our MCFJC was created, representatives from our FJC went from being attendees at the conference to being asked to lead one of the most dynamic and interesting workshops, "Innovative Court Practices in Family Justice Centers." Congratulations for their outstanding presentation go to Sheriff Darren Popkin, Executive Director Hannah Sassoon, Jo Ann Ricchuti and Judge Louise Scrivener – our home team professionals!

Our Center's accomplishments are also due in part to the outstanding support of the numerous and generous individuals, family foundations, corporations and businesses large and small. We couldn't have done it without you!

Thank you for a great first three years.

Resa Levy

Books and Stuffed Animals Galore

The MCFJC aims to create a comfortable and positive memory for every child who comes to the FJC. A take-away item in the form of a cuddly stuffed animal or a good book to read is always a part of the experience for each and every child. Thanks to a recent donation of new books and stuffed animals from BLH Technologies, Inc., children who come to the FJC will have quite the selection from which to choose.

Employees from BLH organized the donation drive specifically to benefit the MCFJC. Several BLH staff including President and CEO Benjamin Harris delivered multiple boxes to the FJC on June 1st, which is recog-

nized around the world as International Children's Day.

The MCFJC Foundation wishes to thank BLH for their thoughtfulness. Their gifts will definitely put a smile on the faces of many young children.

Pictured L to R: BLH President and CEO, Benjamin L. Harris with BLH staff Lu Gao and Alicia Doherty deliver boxes of new books and stuffed animals to the FJC.



From the Desk of MCFJC Foundation President, Tom DeGonia



Thomas DeGonia
MCFJC
Foundation
President

On Sunday, October 14, 2012, The MCFJC Foundation will host its 3rd Annual Benefit at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda. The Benefit Event Committee, chaired by First Lady of Montgomery County, fellow Foundation Board Member, Catherine Leggett, is actively engaged in creating another fantastic evening of excellence and excitement - and you won't want to miss it!

Our Foundation is enormously grateful to all our donors and supporters. At our annual benefit each year we recognize those few who, through their hard work and support, have distinguished themselves for special recognition.

The MCFJC Foundation's Forerunner Award given to "An individual who has been instru-

mental in combating domestic violence and working for the protection of its survivors." This year's honoree is the outstanding Senator Barbara Mikulski. To read more about the Senator's lifelong commitment to ending the scourge of domestic violence, please see our website at www.mcfjcfoundation.org.

Our Inspiring Leader Award is given to "An individual whose inspiring leadership has helped reduce the scourge of domestic violence and furthered the ideals of the Family Justice Center in keeping families safe, giving them hope, and a new start. The Benefit Committee has made a wonderful choice this year in their selection of Deputy State's Attorney Laura Chase, Esq. Read more on our website!

Our Founders Award recognizes "An individual who has shown active commitment to furthering the mission of the Family Justice

Center and has adopted the issue of its mission to raise awareness of domestic violence and encourages colleagues to reach out in volunteer efforts." Dorothy Lennig, Esq., Director of Legal Services House of Ruth Maryland, is this year's very worthy recipient. Read more on our website!

The Corporate Legacy Award honoree is "A business leader who has engaged in philanthropic contributions and support to the FJC and has adopted the issue of its mission to raise awareness of domestic violence and encourages its colleagues to reach out in volunteer efforts." Kaiser Permanente - Mid Atlantic States continues to support our efforts and to respond to the needs of the FJC in a generous and on-going manner. Read more on our website!

Looking forward to seeing you on October 14, 2012!

Tom DeGonia

In Honor of Their Extraordinary Dedication

We had a Party! On May 2, 2012, The Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation, in an effort to formally recognize the extraordinary contributions of several of our key donors and supporters, as well as in celebration of our third birthday, hosted a formal dedication and birthday celebration at The Family Justice Center, 600 Jefferson Plaza, Rockville.

The evening began in the Lobby Area with remarks from Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett (pictured on right) who included in his comments congratulations to both the FJC and the FJC



Foundation for its important and excellent work. The program portion of the evening was then followed by recognition of the many elected officials in attendance, the staff and volunteers of the FJC who give so much of themselves to their work, comments from Foundation Executive Director Resa Levy and Foundation President Tom DeGonia, and short remarks by each of the primary honorees, Verizon, GEICO Philanthropic, and Kaiser Permanente as to why they consider the support of the FJC such a worthwhile cause.

After enjoying hors d'oeuvres and networking with old friends as well as meeting new ones, the group adjourned to the newly dedicated GEICO Philanthropic Foundation Reception Area on the fifth floor, where Sheriff Popkin briefed the attendees on various aspects of the Center's activities, point-



More than 60 public officials, donors, staff and community members gathered for the celebration.

ing out, among other things, the newly created Arts on the Block mosaic which was commissioned for the FJC by a generous donor and now hangs in the Reception Area.

The wonderful evening continued with the formal dedication of the Kaiser Permanente Tuscan Interview Room, eventually concluding in the Verizon Conference Room where the group enjoyed both birthday cake and conversation about the work of the FJC and the FJC Foundation.

Going Green for the Day

Patrons who came in to the Greene Turtle in Olney, MD for lunch or dinner on May 8, 2012 were a part of a greater cause- combating domestic violence in our community. The Greene Turtle partnered

with the MCFJC Foundation to coordinate FJC Day, where ten percent of all the meals purchased were donated in support the activities and operation of the FJC.



Deputies from the Domestic Violence Unit of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office share lunch at the Greene Turtle in Olney, MD in support of FJC Day.

Special Thanks to the Following New and Continuing MCFJC Foundation Sponsors

Thank you to our wonderful supporters!

It is through your gifts that we are able to provide the social, legal, psychological and protective services necessary to rebuild the lives of the women, children and families who have survived domestic and relationship abuse.

Adventist HealthCare
Alchemy Salon of Silver Spring
BLH Technologies, Inc.
Cafritz Foundation

Kindley Assisted Living
Rona E. Kramer
Mid-Atlantic Federal Credit Union
Montgomery County Community Grant

Choose Respect Conference: presentation of the Teen Dating Violence Proclamation by DVCC Chair Councilmember Phil Andrews and Councilmember Nancy Floreen. Sheriff Darren Popkin also recognized the DVCC for its enduring commitment to promote healthy dating practices among our youth and to raise awareness about the dangers of teen dating violence. Attendees were then entertained by Holloway Youth Project, a performing arts youth development organization that tackles teen issues through creative acting performance. Their piece corresponded with the overall conference theme and intensely demonstrated the distress and ambivalence a victim of teen dating abuse experiences, as well as the effectiveness of an unrelenting peer who was there to help the victim navigate her way out of the relationship.

Following the workshop segment of the conference, the participants joined Vicki Boston, Director of Retail Stores for Maryland and DC for Verizon Wireless and Donna Rismiller, Chair of the DVCC's Education and Outreach Committee for the highly anticipated recognition of the participants and winners of the **3rd Annual Choose Respect Public Service Announcement Contest**. The contest challenged teens in grades 7-12 to create a brief PSA on the topic of teen dating violence. PSA submissions had to portray an element of teen dating abuse relevant to middle and high schoolers. Taking home the top prize of \$1000.00 from Verizon Wireless were Roberto Clemente Middle School students Mirabella Roberts, Julian Avenilla, Jean-Young Kim and Daniel Arze, for their



1st Place winners of the Choose Respect PSA Contest receiving their awards.

production of [It's Never Fine](#). Their first place entry utilized a form of electronic communication to very skillfully depict the ambivalence a young person in an abusive dating relationship experiences as she considers disclosing the abuse to a friend. The students' media production teacher, Mr. James Dempsey, encouraged all his 8th grade students to participate in the contest.

Congratulations are extended to Cesar Martinez and Cara Dekelbaum, 2nd place winners representing Sherwood High School and Valencia Fu, 3rd place winner from Roberto Clemente Middle School. To view the wonderful productions from these talented students got to <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjctmpl.asp?url=/content/fjc/news.asp>

The DVCC wishes to thank Verizon Wireless and Montgomery College Takoma Park Campus for their sponsorship of the Choose Respect Montgomery Conference. A special thank you is also extended to our community partners for their ongoing involvement and support of the event.



UMD Internship: actually relevant to life outside of school and it felt great to have that connection with my major outside of the UMD campus. The internship program really put things into perspective for me as to the wonderful skills the Family Science major provided, how I could apply them and actually help someone in more ways than I could have ever imagined. The combination of classes offered in the Family Science major and the hands on experience obtained as a result of the internship program affirmed that I had made the right decision in my choice of study. Enrolling in the Internship Program in my last year of study proved to be a great transition from the world of a full-time student to the world of a full-time employee and I could not be anymore grateful for the wonderful experiences shared in the internship program and at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center.

GOCCP Award 2012: to the Family Justice Center. Detective Hamill transported the client to headquarters for a thorough interview and arranged for an Emergency Room exam. After meeting with the client extensively, she obtained a warrant for the Defendant's arrest and she personally arrested him that same night. She was instrumental in working with the State's Attorney's Office and maintaining contact with the client as necessary.

This anecdote is demonstrative of Detective Hamill's dedication, mindfulness, and meticulousness in conducting her work. She is aware of the dynamics of domestic violence and approaches victims with empathy and understanding in order to ensure that they are not re-traumatized. Congratulations Detective Hamill!