



# Montgomery County Family Justice Center

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

## SPECIAL POINT OF INTEREST:



**MCFJC  
FOUNDATION'S  
3RD ANNUAL  
BENEFIT  
10/14/12  
WWW.MCFJCFOUN  
DATION.ORG**

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## From the Desk of Director Uma Ahluwalia, DHHS

Montgomery County is an inclusive community, with a collaborative mindset. Collectively, we provide a safety net for the most vulnerable among us. This is one of the most significant values espoused by County Executive Isiah Leggett, making our county one of the best places to live and work. There is no greater example of public-private partnership than the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC). We are now four years into a unique collaboration that brings together various State and County agencies, private partners, and the community. The FJC has been instrumental in providing a safe haven and safety net for victims of domestic violence and their families. As Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), it is gratifying to be able to report that the alliance between HHS and FJC continues to be strong. Through this joint effort, we are able to assist countless victims of domestic violence.

This year marks the 36<sup>th</sup> year of the Abused Persons Program's (APP) existence. The APP is our strongest presence within the FJC. It started back in 1976 with the recognition that domestic violence victims needed a wide array of services to help restore them to safety and health. Depending on their needs and fears domestic violence victims can access services through various sites, be it at HHS locations, the courthouses, the FJC and or Police. APP provides the following services to assist domestic violence victims in their path towards safety and a life without violence:

- Crisis intake and ongoing counseling by two APP therapists three times per week at the FJC

- Participation by APP at the FJC meetings such as roll calls, ALERT and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee
- Participation at the Domestic Violence Fatality Review meetings
- Provision of a bilingual advocate two days a week at the domestic violence court docket and for felony cases in Circuit Court



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

- A GTEAP grant through the Family Justice Center funds approximately 9 hours weekly of existing VASAP part-time victim assistants to provide domestic violence services at the Silver Spring District Courthouse
- The SAFE START therapeutic group program for children who witness DV receives clinical oversight from an APP Supervisory Therapist and SAFE START runs groups both at Piccard and at 8818 Georgia Avenue in conjunction with APP's groups for DV victims. Additionally a group is also provided for children at our Betty Ann Krankhe Center (BAK) shelter location.
- 24 hours a day, 365 days per year shelter admissions, phone and face to face crisis intakes through the Crisis

Center

- Intake crisis services, counseling and group support at the APP main office and satellite locations both in English and Spanish
- Psycho-educational groups in English and Spanish
- Implementation of the Lethality Assessment Protocol in collaboration with the Police, Crisis Center and FJC
- Shelter placements through the Betty Ann Krankhe Shelter, a contract with Family Services
- Motel emergency placements when shelter is full through HHS emergency services and Crisis Center
- Psychiatric evaluations and medication services

In addition to the above victim related services APP also provides assessments and groups to educate and break the cycle of abuse. These services are geared towards DV offenders. APP offers a pre-trial male and female offender group as well as a 22 week State Certified program for DV offenders. This is the only State certified program being offered in Montgomery County and it is housed at a separate location from victims.

We remain committed to continue utilizing the tremendous array of resources our partners bring to the table, as we seek new and better ways to serve clients. To enhance the comprehensive array of services, more innovations are being added to FJC's robust portfolio. The Sheriff's Office partnership with the University of Maryland, placed interns at FJC who obtained valuable experience in the fields of **(Continued to page 6)**

# Family Justice Center & Catholic Charities

## Team up to Serve Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence

The Family Justice Center Staff extend a very special congratulations to **Karla N. Smith** for her investiture as an Associate Judge to the District Court of Maryland

The Family Justice Center (FJC) and Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services have been partnering for more than three years to provide legal representation to immigrant victims of domestic violence. Pro bono attorneys from Catholic Charities conduct intake on-site at the FJC to assess a client's potential case for immigration relief. Clients who receive pro bono legal assistance through this partnership are all victims of domestic violence, and they have all suffered physical, emotional and psychological abuse by individuals whom they once trusted. But the immigration status of these individuals renders them more vulnerable than many other victims. Abusers frequently use the lack of legal status or the victims' lack of knowledge about her immigration options to control the vic-

tims' life, and victims are unwilling to come forward and talk about the abuse for fear of being removed from the U.S. and often their U.S. citizen children.

Numerous FJC clients served by Catholic Charities have had successful outcomes to their cases, which have changed their lives. For example, Ms. M from Mongolia gained legal status and work authorization for herself and her son, who was attending university and achieved a 4.0 GPA. A team of pro bono attorneys helped a Nicaraguan woman obtain a U Visa (a visa for victims of crime)—the client and her young daughters were all victims of the abuser's violence. In addition to emotional and psychological abuse from her US citizen

spouse, a client from the Czech Republic was forced to withstand her husband carrying on affairs with other women in their home. The husband kept the client from leaving by threatening to have her deported, but after receiving legal status this woman was able to move to a new home and begin working.

Once these immigrant victims have the courage to come forward, the legal assistance they receive through Catholic Charities and the FJC puts them on a path towards legal status and, more importantly, independence. The victories of these clients and pro bono attorneys reveal how important it is to seek out the unseen faces and unheard voices of abused immigrant women and men in the US who are still too afraid to speak out about domestic violence.

## Choose Respect Montgomery

### Public Service Announcement Contest

With thousands of students in attendance, the MCPS Back-to-School Fair on August 25th provided the perfect venue to kick-off the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's (DVCC) Choose Respect Montgomery Public Service Announcement Contest. Middle and high school students from various corners of the County stopped by the Choose Respect table to

learn about the contest and view the winning videos from previous years. Students of all ages were treated to a Choose Respect Montgomery bracelet.

The contest, held in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence and Awareness Month, February 2013 is sponsored by the DVCC and Verizon Wireless. It is intended to evoke teens' interest, awareness and perspective on the issue of teen dating violence and challenges them to submit a brief video production that focuses on a topic related to teen dating violence. Participants are also

asked to include resource information such as the phone number to a local or national helpline. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in addition to the opportunity to have the winning production broadcast locally. The sponsoring school, youth group, teacher or adult leader will also receive recognition.

For the contest flyer and entry forms and to view the winning entries from the previous contest go to

<http://bit.ly/o8j01>



**ATTENTION STUDENTS GRADES 7 - 12!**  
 Enter the Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest!

*Choose Respect Montgomery 2013*

**Write it, film it and submit it.**  
 Team up with your friends in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month February 2013 and create a video that promotes attention to dating abuse. Earn your student services learning hours!

- ✓ 1 in 3 teen girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.
- ✓ Nationwide, nearly 1 in 10 high school students has been hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend.

**You have the power to change those statistics!**  
**Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2013.**  
 For more information about registration and contest rules, visit: <http://bit.ly/o8j01>  
 Winners will receive cash prizes, the opportunity to have their PSA broadcast locally and recognition for their school or community group. Winners will be announced February 14, 2013 on our Choose Respect Montgomery Facebook page.

For more information call 443-727-5573.  
 Sponsored by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council of Montgomery County and Verizon Wireless in collaboration with many other County agencies and organizations.

*Respect. Give it. Get it! Get involved!*

# MCPD Provides Critical Investigative Services at the FJC



**MCPD Officer  
Tamara Lucas  
Contributing  
Writer**

On March 26, 2012, I was given the opportunity to work with the Family Crimes Division as an investigator at the Family Justice Center, primarily dealing with domestic violence cases. In general, police officers assigned to the Family Justice Center (FJC) handle misdemeanor cases when requested by the State Attorney's Office (SAO). The officer works directly with the Sheriff's Office, the FJC and the SAO by providing police information, attending weekly meetings and making court appearances.

On a personal note, this assignment has allowed me to get a better perspective of how the justice system works. As patrol officers, we respond to many calls for service each day. Patrol officers are dispatched to calls for service and once on the scene, make sure the scene is safe, get the "Who, What, Why, When and Where" to complete a report if necessary, and move on to the next call. The report is then forwarded to the specialized unit to complete the investigation. This assignment has given me insight on what goes on beyond the initial investigation and how important it is for the first officer on the scene to gather as much information as possible, including witness information and evidence.

Dealing with all types of people with different issues is why I chose to become a police officer. While working with the Sheriff's Office and the SAO, I have acquired knowledge and experience that I can now use when working with victims, suspects and citizens in general. "Montgomery County Police articulates as a fundamental reason for existing as an organization, the commitment to the community policing philosophy, which is to provide quality service by working in partnership with the community to resolve quality of life issues." This can only be accomplished by working as a team within the justice system and aspiring for the same goal, providing a safe environment and diligently serving the community.

**FJC  
Update:  
Since the  
Grand Opening  
4000 domestic  
violence clients  
representing  
100 different  
countries of  
origin have  
received  
services at  
the FJC.**

## Meet Debbie Feinstein

The Family Justice Center staff and partners welcome Debbie Feinstein as Chief of the Family Violence Division of the State's Attorney's Office. Debbie has worked as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office since April 2000 and specializes in the prosecution of felony domestic violence, physical child abuse and sexual child abuse cases.

Debbie graduated cum laude from Cornell University with a degree in 1992 and she received her law degree with honors in 1997 from The George Washington University Law School. Following graduation Debbie served as a Law Clerk for the Honorable Glenn T. Harrell, Jr., from 1997-1998. Prior to attending law school, she worked as a field organizer for the American Israel Public Affairs Com-

mittee. She is an active member of the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Violence and has attended numerous national conferences on domestic violence and sexual assault.

Congratulations Debbie! FJC staff and partners look forward to working with you.

## The Job of the LOTD



**Carla Avendano  
SAO Legal Assistant  
Contributing Writer**

Before the Family Justice Center (FJC) opens its doors to the public, the Domestic Violence Legal Assistant of the Day (LOTD) is out on a "jail run." At the Montgomery County Detention Center, two mountainous piles are perfectly stacked inside grey-

colored bins. The LOTD tackles one pile at a time, flagging each relevant case with a bright orange paper labeled "Domestic Violence." Additionally, the LOTD makes a copy of each DV case going to the bond hearing later that day for offenders that were arrested the night before.

With cases in hand, the LOTD arrives at the office in time to gather additional information on each offender. At our daily inter-agency 10 o'clock meeting between the State's Attorney's and Sheriff's Office, and the Abused

Persons Program, criminal cases on bonds and protective order cases are reviewed. As a team, we discuss the victim's safety and needs along with any previous history of violence. The team then determines what other steps should be taken to ensure the victim's well-being and the safety of our community.

After the meeting, the day has only begun. **(Continued to page 6)**



# Family Justice Center Foundation News

## FJC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS

- Resa Levy  
Executive Director
- Thomas M. DeGonia II  
President
- Maura Lynch  
Vice President and  
Secretary
- Dorothy Fait  
Treasurer
- Marilyn Bagel
- David Belkin
- Judith Clark
- Catherine Leggett
- Melanie Ortel
- Maria Ryan
- Lewis Selis

## FJC FOUNDATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

- The Honorable  
Sharon Grosfeld
- The Honorable  
Constance A. Morella
- Rabbi David Rose
- The Honorable  
Ida G. Ruben
- The Honorable  
Duchy Trachtenberg

## From the Desk of the MCFJC Foundation Executive Director, Resa Levy



Resa Levy  
MCFJC Foundation  
Executive Director

I am delighted to share with you that Lt. Governor Anthony Brown and Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler will join Event Chair Catherine Leggett, numerous dignitaries and hundreds of caring guests at the MCFJC Foundation's 3rd Annual Benefit on Sunday evening, October 14, 2012, from 5:00-9:00 pm, at the HYATT Regency Bethesda – and we hope you'll be there too!

Greta Kreuz, Award-winning Reporter and Anchor, ABC7/WJLA-TV, will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies. The event, held each year on a Sunday evening in October, helps remind us that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Dignitaries will join corporate and foundation leaders, as well as numerous individual supporters to help raise awareness and funds for the Montgomery County Family Justice Center.

Event highlights will include recognition of our honorees: Senator Barbara Mikulski, will receive the Foundation's Forerunner Award; Laura Chase, Esq., Deputy State's Attorney's, Montgomery County, will receive the Inspiring Leader Award; our wonderful corporate supporter, Kaiser Permanente, will be recognized as our Corporate Legacy

awardee; and Dorothy Lennig, Esq., Director, Legal Clinic, House of Ruth Maryland, will receive the Marilyn J. Praisner Award. Each will be honored for their work in the field of domestic violence and for their support of the work of the MCFJC and the MCFJC Foundation. Our Benefit Committee has been fantastic, and their efforts, along with those of the MCFJC Foundation Board, have secured sensational items for both the Silent and Live Auctions including vacation packages, jewelry, artworks, numerous fashionable accessories, sporting and concert event tickets and more! A special appeal led by a professional auctioneer will raise additional funds specifically for the MCFJC's Children's Library Fund. This is a Fund that was developed to ensure that each child who visits the MCFJC leaves the facility with a new book for their very own.

So please join us for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual MCFJC Foundation Benefit – Sunday, October 14, 2012 at the HYATT Regency Bethesda from 5:00-9:00 pm. You can register on line at [www.mcfjcfoundation.org](http://www.mcfjcfoundation.org) or by expressing your interest in learning more by writing to [mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com). Hope to see you on Sunday, October 14<sup>th</sup>!

Regards to all,  
Resa Levy  
Executive Director

## From the Desk of MCFJC Foundation President, Tom DeGonia



Thomas DeGonia  
MCFJC  
Foundation  
President

I am delighted to share with you that Chief Judge Robert M. Bell, has issued an order institutionalizing a Pilot Project initiated by the Maryland Judiciary to allow for video conferencing between the Montgomery County courts and the FJC for temporary ex parte protective orders. Funds for this project, were provided by Verizon Wireless through the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. Judge Bell's approval allows the Project to become institutionalized and can now be a model for other jurisdictions throughout the State.

The Project allows for electronic two-way video communication between a judge's bench and the MCFJC

in cases where an ExParte Protective Order is requested. Since one of the most dangerous times for a victim of domestic violence is when that person is seeking an initial Protective Order, this type of electronic communication is critical in helping victims live safer lives and makes the courts more accessible for victims.

As a practicing attorney, I am extremely proud of the way in which members of the legal profession, both those on the Bench, as well as dozens and dozens of attorneys throughout our State, have been supportive of the work of the MCFJC and the MCFJC Foundation. In fact, two of our honorees this year, Dorothy Lennig, Esq. Director of Legal Services, House of Ruth Maryland as well as Laura Chase, Esq. Deputy States Attorney, are not only actively supportive at this time, but each also took a leadership role in the very establish-

ment of the FJC.

There are many ways in which members of the legal profession have helped. Since our very first year, the MCFJC Foundation was granted the opportunity to distribute materials at our Montgomery County Annual Law Day, the various Bar Associations have held toy and gift card drives every year to benefit the FJC, and we now have more than twenty pro bono attorneys standing ready, willing and able to help those who come to the FJC seeking services.

We value all of our many wonderful partners, and none more so than those in the legal profession. On behalf of all of those you have helped live safer, happier and healthier lives, we thank you.

Tom DeGonia  
President, MCFJC Foundation

## MCFJC Foundation Establishes Children's Library Fund

Families fleeing from an abusive relationship oftentimes do so with just the clothes on their back and little else. Favorite toys and books are left behind.

Since its opening in 2009, the MCFJC has endeavored to provide each child who comes to the Center with something special - a new book that they can keep for their very own. In order to respond to this on-going commitment, the MCFJC Foundation has established the **Children's Library Fund**. Donations of both small and large amounts are greatly appreciated. Gifts to the Fund will be acknowledged with a bookplate inset into

the cover of the book indicating the donor's name (unless the donor chooses to be anonymous). The gift may also be given in someone's name to recognize or to honor a



significant achievement, a birthday, anniversary, etc. In that case, both the donor and the honoree's name will be noted. Each donor will receive a gift acknowledgment letter.

The Fund was first established

to honor Karla N. Smith, upon her appointment to the District Court of Maryland. Gifts to the MCFJC Foundation's Children's Library Fund seemed an appropriate place to recognize Karla's tremendous achievement as well as her love for children and her commitment to their well-being.

To learn more, please contact MCFJC Foundation's Community Initiative Chair, Judith Clark at [sheinspires@yahoo.com](mailto:sheinspires@yahoo.com) or [mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com). Donations may be made to MCFJC Foundation, PO Box 10692, Rockville, MD 20849 or on line at [www.mcfjcfoundation.org](http://www.mcfjcfoundation.org)

## 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.*

**Community Builder-Silver**

Shaw Family Foundation

**Community Partner**

William E. Cross Foundation, Inc.  
Kaiser Permanente

**Community Advocate - Gold**

Alicia Doherty  
Catherine and Ike Leggett  
Stein, Sperling, Bennett, De Jong, Driscoll PC

**Community Advocate – Silver**

Adventist Health Care  
Anonymous  
Mid-Atlantic Federal Credit Union  
Victim’s Rights Foundation  
D & A Sports and Entertainment LLC  
Etheridge, Quinn, Kemp, McAuliffe, Rowan & Hartinger

**Friends of the Children’s Library Fund**

Elaine Bloom  
Mitch and Ruth Cohen  
Ruth Freedman  
Neil and Leslie Greenstein

**We’re on the Web:**

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc) & [www.mcfjcfoundation.org](http://www.mcfjcfoundation.org)

**(From the Desk Cont. from page 1)** criminal justice, family studies and other disciplines, while providing support to FJC families. The bi-lingual therapist provided by the House of Ruth, maintains therapy groups and individual therapy 12 hours each week. This supplements the work of staff from the HHS Abused Persons Program. A grant from Verizon allowed FJC to turn a conference room into a training center, complete with wide-screen monitors and off-site meeting capability. Finally, a partnership between the State Department of Juvenile Services, the Sheriff’s Office, State’s Attorney’s office, and Montgomery County Public Schools, will support the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council’s efforts to facilitate access to Peace Orders for teen victims of domestic violence when the perpetrator is a minor.

Through the FJC, HHS agencies and our many partners we have done a remarkable job

of providing a safety net and comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence. The work needs to continue as we still have much more to accomplish such as the need to increase transitional housing to victims after discharge from the shelter.

When government agencies work together with local profit and non profit agencies we can achieve truly remarkable results. We must continue our work, our coordination and our collaboration so that every person can live free and safe from domestic violence!

Uma Ahluwalia  
Director DHHS

**(LOTD continued from page 3)** On average, a DV legal assistant works on 20 or more cases a month, ranging from 2<sup>nd</sup> degree assaults to violations of protective order. The LOTD is not only meticulous and diligent at ensuring each case is well prepared for trial, but she builds a strong relationship with each victim.



**SAO Staff Pictured from L to R: Nicole Brito, Carla Acevedo, Beth Landau, Hilda Ibanez and Christina Miles**

Victims come to the FJC asking for more than just help, They come searching for answers, reassurance, justice and a brighter future for their children. The LOTD takes pictures of their injuries, jots down details of their accounts of violence, requests certified medical records, 9-11 calls, and certified protective orders. She works on the case until the day of the trial, making sure the victim is safe during that time and ready to testify. However, all of that is miniscule in comparison to the thank yous and humility received from victims when their offenders are convicted.