



Montgomery County Family Justice Center

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SUMMER 2010

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

THE MCFJC
FOUNDATION
BENEFIT
OCTOBER 3,
2010



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From the Desk of Chief Deputy Darren M. Popkin

We have recently marked a groundbreaking first year for the Montgomery County Family Justice Center. The FJC has more than met its goal of providing comprehensive services to families afflicted by domestic violence by bringing together law enforcement, social services, counseling programs and legal services, in a new model of collaboration. I am proud that the enthusiasm which the Center generated in the community and among the staff has increased as we begin our second year.

The major initiative for this year will be the launch of the video conferencing project, the first in the State of Maryland and one of a handful throughout the country. Allowing clients to obtain an ex-parte order from the safety and security of the FJC will complete the link of services. We are grateful to the Maryland Judiciary for seeing the need and undertaking this project with us and to the Verizon Hopeline Wireless Foundation for funding it.

Clients endorse the success of what we set out to accomplish, a seamless web of services in a safe setting, with such comments as: "All of the staff were incredi-

ble and they took care of me and made me feel good for the first time in weeks." "I was treated with respect and kindness." "I felt safe, well informed and not alone." "Everyone worked exceptionally well together as a team."



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

While we have generated a successful collaboration between private partners and public agencies, the backbone of the FJC remains the remarkable staff that provides assistance to the clients who come through the doors each day. They exemplify the professionalism exhibited every day by every employee. From the Deputies and Civilian staff in the Sheriff's Office who make safety a priority by serving protective orders from the court immediately, by performing safety checks when petitioners request them, by entering data in the criminal databases to hold offenders accountable,

by assisting with protective order applications and by being a presence on site to meet the emergency needs of clients. To the prosecutors, legal assistants and support staff from the State's Attorney's Office who are a phone call away when clients need to talk about a criminal case. To the dedicated employees of the Abused Persons Program who help with the multitude of service needs which families in transition often have. To the attorneys from the House of Ruth who work to ensure that all eligible petitioners receive representation at hearings. To the volunteers who have committed their time and talents and made it possible for us to open the doors.

This issue and the next highlights what they do.

For my part, as the Chief Deputy of the Sheriff's Office, I recognize that the domestic violence deputies are reflective of the specially trained and hard working staff in the entire Sheriff's Office.

It has been my great pleasure to have worked with an amazing group of committed professionals at the Family Justice Center. Together we have created a model that others will strive to attain.

You Start Your Work Day



(From L to R) Deputy III Robert Balsler, Deputy III Shane Scott, Deputy III Francis Donnelly, Sergeant Conor Toole and Deputy III Robert Bass.



Lt. Robert Bonanno of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Section.

You start your work-day....

It's 85 degrees outside and it's in the evening. You start by putting on a Tyvek suit with rubber boots, butyl gloves, and a respiratory mask. This is when you start to lose lots of water weight through your sweat glands. You do this to protect yourself from the hazardous conditions that you are about to be exposed to as you enter a home to take an individual into custody for an involuntary medical evaluation. This is the beginning of your shift.

You chase down a metro bus on foot. Stop an individual who gets off the bus that attempts to elude you by running into the metro rail tunnel to get on a train. All the while he

clings to his infant child, who you are there to take into custody, and you successfully do so.

You serve an emergency evaluation on an emotionally disturbed person who stated he was going to kill himself. You discover a "secret" room behind a bookshelf inside the residence that contains over two hundred handguns and rifles. You also locate a live 40mm shell from World War I, evacuate the neighborhood, contact the Fire Marshal's Office and Andrews Air force Base Explosive Ordinance Disposal Section. Once the mortar is removed you discover four World War II German machine guns among the two hundred firearms.

You serve a Protection Order on a subject and dis-

cover in plain view three ounces of packaged marijuana, over three thousand dollars and a loaded .38 caliber handgun.

You discover a victim of domestic violence with a laceration to her face and hand caused by a knife. You render aid to the victim, follow a blood trail left by the assailant and locate him with a large laceration to his chest. He's holding a butcher knife to his throat and you calmly request numerous times for him to drop the knife. He fails to comply with your demands and continues to hold the butcher knife to his throat. You place yourself in a tactical position, deploy your taser and take the assailant into custody without further (Sworn continued on page 6)

Busy Shifts are the Norm for PSTRA Unit at the FJC

The phone in the Domestic Violence Section of the FJC rings and Brandy promptly answers it and immediately begins to assess the caller's distress. It is the petitioner of a newly issued interim protective order. She is upset because the respondent has returned to their home in violation of the order. Down the hall, Scarlet conducts a safety interview with a Spanish-speaking petitioner and her two small children. In another office Donna is progressing through piles of cases, meticulously validating and updating chart information against national,

state and local crime databases. Meanwhile, Adrianna explains the service process to a petitioner of an Emergency Evaluation Petition and Tanya contacts another law enforcement agency in a neighboring jurisdiction to coordinate service of a Montgomery County order to a respondent that resides in that county. On evenings and weekends, Margaret, Melissa and Cecilia handle multiple calls from various law enforcement agencies. For these are just a few of the many tasks a Public Safety Telephone Reporting Aide (PSTRA) may encounter daily at the FJC.

The busy PSTRA unit at the FJC is comprised of 7 employees and 1 supervisor.

This small group staffs the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office's Domestic Violence Section 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As the job title indicates, their primary job responsibility involves safety: that of County citizens but also the safety of the sworn officers who serve the orders. With an average of 30 new orders daily, Brandy Wilson, the unit supervisor reports that the PSTRA's interview the petitioner of each and every order. The interview must be thorough in order to obtain accurate identifying information about the respondent, in addition to cautions. The cautions can be anything from (PSTRA continued on page 6)



(From L to R) Scarlet Gomes, Tanya Bettis, Brandy Wilson, Adrianna Crutchfield and Margaret Hoffman Not Pictured: Donna Hottinger, Melissa Oliver and Cecelia Wilson.

FJC Victim Assistants Provide a Variety of Safety Options for Victims of Domestic Violence

It's Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. and the 45th client of the week has just walked in for services. One of the five Victim Assistants of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office welcomes the client to the Family Justice Center to learn about their current situation and the reason for their visit to the FJC. The members of this terrific team are safety planning specialists who help guide clients who want to take a step towards change. For those who ask "What's next?," they offer options.

The Sheriff's Victim Assistants educate each visitor about the services available at the FJC and help clients develop a personalized action plan. This plan will often include the preparation of petitions for Peace and Protective Orders.

The Victim Assistants are the

liaison between the victim and law enforcement. They can register clients to receive notifications from the County's detention center, in order to alert a victim when an offender may be released from detention. The Victim Assistants can also enroll clients for the installation of a pendant alarm at their home, compliments of ADT Security Services, in order to speed law enforcement response, in the event an offender should approach the home in violation of a protective order. For added security and confidence, the Victim Assistants can arrange for deputies of the Sheriff's Office to contact a client by phone, or to visit the client's home, in order to check on the client's safety during hours of concern.

When not fulfilling these roles, the Victim Assistants make every effort to contact by phone those



Victim Assistants from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

petitioners who have obtained a protective order but have not yet come in person to the FJC. All petitioners are encouraged to take advantage of the many services that the Sheriff's Office and the Family Justice Center have to offer, in the hope that with the right support, survivors of domestic violence can access the resources to enhance their safety and change their lives for the better.

The Abused Person's Program

The Abused Person's Program, funded by Montgomery County and the Department of Human Resources of Maryland, meets the State's criteria for a comprehensive Domestic Violence Program. This includes provision of a 24 hour Hotline, an emergency shelter for victims and their children, crisis counseling for domestic violence victims, domestic violence information and referrals and an Abuser Intervention Treatment Program.

When the Family Justice Center (FJC) opened its doors in April 2009, the Abused Persons Program (APP) established a presence at the Center by moving the victim advocate services which had previously been located at 1301 Piccard Drive to the FJC. Victim advocates



APP Staff (from L to R) Diana Roche, Barbara Shepp, Vivian Levi, and Mindy Flax.

are on site to educate victims of partner abuse about domestic violence, to develop safety plans, assist in writing protective or peace orders, and to provide victims with information about the legal process. APP maintains a therapist on site at the FJC for individuals who may need immediate counseling support services.

In addition to the victim services provided at the Family Jus-

tice Center, the Abused Persons Program provides victim advocacy services at the Rockville Circuit Court and the Rockville and Silver Spring District Courts. On-going counseling services for victims and the Abuser Intervention Treatment Program are offered at 1301 Piccard Drive and 8818 Georgia Avenue.

There are 19 full- and part-time staff members in the program, including victim advocates, licensed therapists, a psychiatrist, an office staff person, supervisors and a manager. Seven staff members are bilingual. There are also over 40 highly trained volunteers with APP who assist at the Courts, and who are on call to assist victims at the Commissioner's office.



Family Justice Center Foundation News

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

Save the Date

*1st Annual Family Justice Center
Foundation Benefit
Sunday, October 3, 2010 5-9 p.m.
Keeping them Safe. Giving them Hope.
And a New Start.*

Foundation President's Welcome



*Resa Levy
FJC Foundation
President*

The summer months are usually a time of relaxation and rest, but the 1st Annual MCFJC Foundation Benefit Committee, under the leadership of our Chair, Catherine Leggett, never got that message! Meetings are taking place, sponsors are being sought, invitations are being designed and plans are in full swing for what promises to be a poignant, meaningful and fun-filled evening.

So please mark your calendars for Sunday evening, October 3, 2010, to join us at the Hilton Hotel, Rockville, from 5 - 9 pm. The theme for the evening is "Keeping them Safe. Giving them Hope. And a New Start."

While we plan our event with great anticipation and excitement, we are ever mindful of the life-saving work that the staff and the volunteers of the MCFJC accomplish – with your help! This has truly been a magnificent public /private partnership.

So what will your support of the October 3rd benefit mean to the hurting families who come to the MCFJC for help?

Your ticket purchase, your support as a sponsor, (levels and benefits of sponsorship are noted on the "events" section of our website at www.mcfjcfoundation.org), your donation even if you cannot attend the event has direct outcomes: additional video conferencing equipment for client interview rooms are needed to ensure client safety; every day new clients and children come bringing the need for further education, training and psychological services; there are technical needs, sophisticated needs, and there are simple needs such as on-going fresh food and even diapers for those clients who have come to the MCFJC seeking services while they have their small children in tow.

The MCFJC and the MCFJC Foundation, ***along with your help***, continue to save lives every day. We hope to see you on October 3, 2010 at the Foundation's 1st Annual Benefit.

Resa Levy, President
MCFJC Foundation

PS. If you would like to ensure that we have your most current contact information, please email us at mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com and provide all relevant details including your mailing and email address and phone numbers if possible.

Chaplains Provide Spiritual Healing at the FJC



*Rabbi David Rose
Contributing Writer*

For 18 years I have been educating my fellow clergy about Domestic Violence, but only in the last 6 months as a chaplain at Montgomery County's Family Justice Center have I come to understand the depth of the spiritual pain

and damage caused by Domestic Abuse. As physical abuse causes bodily harm and as emotional abuse leads to psychological trauma, I have found that all types of abuse are damaging to an individual's spirit

and spiritual wellbeing. As individuals we each live in relationship to self, to others, to the world and to the divine – however we each understand the divine. These crucial relationships remind us that we have intrinsic worth and value. The isolating and demeaning nature of abuse is destructive to each of these human interactions and to one's sense of inner self.

As a spiritual care giver at the FJC, along with the other volunteer chaplains, I have sought through my presence to affirm the inherent importance of all who visit the FJC. Sitting with clients, learning about their spiritual practices and beliefs and communicating my feelings of hope I have witnessed individual

after individual sit a little taller as they summon up their inner resources. I have been privileged to be with people of many different faith traditions guiding them in finding the hope their belief system brings to them. The presence of spiritual caregivers at the FJC is a reminder that it is a distortion of all faiths to abuse another human being.

My time at the FJC has blessed me with a greater awareness of the ability of each of us to grow and to actualize our unique sacred potential.

*Rabbi David Rose
Family Justice Center Foundation,
Advisory Board*



*Donna K. Rismiller
Contributing Writer*

Anyone, in any profession, can make an impact in the lives of our county residents recovering from the effects of abuse in their homes. Recently, several Montgomery County lawyers pledged their support to help the clients of the Family Justice Center. The annual meeting and Law Day Celebration, for the Montgomery County Bar Association, was held on May 4, 2010 in

Bethesda, Maryland. In the words of the newly inducted president of the Bar Association, Patricia Weaver, this annual meeting is an opportunity to "spotlight our good works and bring public attention to the positive impact that lawyers in Montgomery County are having in our local or larger communities."

To clench this opportunity, Family Justice Center Foundation board members and other supporters of the Center attended the annual celebration, to provide information regarding the center to talk to local

attorneys about how they can get involved to support its work. The response from the attorneys was wonderful and seven local attorneys joined the existing panel of attorneys who have already pledged their support by agreeing to provide no cost representation to clients of the Center in complex divorce or custody disputes. It is encouraging to know that professionals in our county recognize the need for their services and respond to the call for help. As the head of the Lawyer's Initiative for the Family Justice Center Foundation, I am always interested to hear from other attorneys who want to use their skills to help create safe homes for our county residents. For more information on how to pledge legal help for survivors in our county, please send an email to DRismiller@RismillerLaw.com.

*Donna K. Rismiller, Esq.
Lawyer's Initiative Chair
Family Justice Center Foundation, Inc.*

Lawyers Respond to the Call

Verizon's Gift to Make Video Protective Order Hearing a Reality

Verizon Wireless Foundation's generous gift launched MCFJC Foundation's initial fundraising efforts and will establish one of the first Video Protective Order Project in the United States. For survivors who are seeking an Ex-Parte Protective Order this project will allow them to remain in the safety and security of the MCFJC

while having a video hearing with the judge.

As expected, the process has been time consuming and detailed, as there are many, many aspects to this revolutionary way of handling the relevant procedures. We thank in particular the judges: Chief Judge Ben Clyburn and Chief Judge Robert Bell for their vision,

as well as Montgomery County Judges Ann Harrington, John Debelius, Eugene Wolfe, and Louise Scrivener, for their time, their patience and their rock solid determination to ensure that this new (**Verizon** Cont. on page 6)

Special Thanks to the Following New and Continuing MCFJC Foundation Sponsors

Thank you to our wonderful donors!

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

*Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of
The Mid-Atlantic States*

Shaw Family Foundation

Community Advocate

*Women's Bar Association of
Montgomery County*

Community Supporter

*Soroptimist International of
Upper Montgomery County*

Aaron Family

Alfred and Yvonne Moritz

Degrober Family

We're on the Web:

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc & www.mcfjcfoundation.org

(Sworn cont.) injury and render aid to him.

The Sheriff's domestic violence section is comprised of a group of dedicated, professional, motivated and highly skilled law enforcement men and women. In addition to their regular areas of law enforcement, these men and women have obtained certifications and are also part of many other specialty units. These certifications and specialized units include: Special Events Response Team / Civil Disturbance, Firearms Task Force, Crisis / Tactical Hostage negotiator, Tactical Special Response Team, Tactical medicine, Crisis Intervention, Taser instructor, Honor Guard, Firearm instructors, Alcohol enforcement task force and field training officers.

This is the first of a multi part article on the work of the Sheriff's domestic violence deputies.

(PSTRA cont.) gun possession to communicable diseases. From there the PSTRA conducts a background check of each respondent and prepares a detailed service file for deputies to review prior to the service of each order. Ongoing meticulous maintenance and updating of these files by the PSTRAs will then continue for the duration of the order and beyond. Accurate updating of respondents' files is crucial since other law enforcement agencies rely on this data to determine the issuance of

a gun permit or to arrest an individual for violation of an order. PSTRAs will also regularly respond to public and petitioner inquiries about the orders.

Brandy states, "A PSTRA must be well organized, detailed oriented, have excellent communication skills and a strong ability to multi-task." With certainty, PSTRAs concur that their jobs can be hectic; they state that it is balanced with a sense of accomplishment gained from helping others.

(Verizon cont.) technological approach will work well with our court system and help serve our community.

We are now in the installation and testing phase. Implementation should begin in mid to late fall, 2010.

Once again, and on behalf of those who shall benefit most from this new process, we thank Verizon Wireless Foundation for their wonderful gift to the MCFJC Foundation and the Family Justice Center.

***FJC Update:
Since the Grand Opening
1750 domestic violence clients
representing 100
different countries of origin have
received services at the FJC.***



FJC staff members during the 1st year celebration event.