



Victims' Rights Brief

For Arizona's Justice System Administrators, Practitioners and Advocates



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National Crime Victims' Rights Week Arizona Awards Ceremony

Options, services and hope for crime survivors: How would you help?

This collaborative event is held annually to recognize National Crime Victims' Rights Week and to honor the outstanding achievements and tireless efforts of those serving victims of crime in Arizona. This year's event was held on April 22, 2024 at the Orpheum Theatre, with featured keynote speaker Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya and remarks and awards presented by Attorney General Kris Mayes.



Distinguished Service Awards

On behalf of the Arizona Attorney General's Office, individuals and teams were awarded by Attorney General Kris Mayes, Distinguished Service Awards for their outstanding work with crime victims.

- **Advocacy and Direct Services:** This award recognizes an individual or group of individuals who has evidenced passion and perseverance in facilitating victim justice and healing by both promoting and ensuring victims' legal rights, as well as crucial services to meet their needs for recovery from the shattering effect of crime.
- **Leadership:** This individual or an organization has exercised principles and practices of effective leadership, thereby serving as a model or setting an example for others.
- **Innovative Practices:** An individual, group of individuals, or an organization may receive this award for developing programs to serve victims in a new way, providing services where none previously existed, or used technology to assist victims.

Inside this issue:

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Distinguished Service Awards

Page 1

Distinguished Service Award Winners

Page 2

Distinguished Service Award Winners Cont.

Page 3

Distinguished Service Award Winners Cont.

Page 4

Victims' Rights Education

Page 5

- **Service Coordination:** Where a group of individuals or an organization has been instrumental in establishing comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary approaches to serving crime victims within its community or jurisdiction.
- **Public Policy:** Where an individual, a group of individuals, or an organization has made an invaluable contribution or played a critical role in ensuring public policy reforms, including legislative enactments, aimed at improving the treatment of crime victims.
- **Courage in Action:** This award recognizes a crime victim or survivor who has exhibited perseverance or determination with his or her own victimization by creating positive systemic change on behalf of other victims.

Distinguished Service Award Winners

Advocacy and Direct Services

Johannah Rutschow
Cottonwood Police Department



Johannah Rutschow currently serves as the Victim Advocate for the Cottonwood Police Department (CWPD). Johannah is a part of the Criminal Investigations Unit where she provides victims of crime with services such as crisis intervention, counseling, court accompaniment, and advocacy, and assistance through the criminal justice system. Her exceptional professionalism and remarkable performance are evident in the increased responsibilities she assumes on her own. Johannah utilizes the CWPD Victim Services K9, a loving yellow lab named Tilly, to ease tensions that the justice system places on victims. As a certified Crisis Responder, a member of the Yavapai County Child Abduction Response Team, the Multi-disciplinary Team on Sex Trafficking and a member of the Executive Committee of the local Coordinated Community Response Team, Johannah proves to be a very valuable and unique asset to the CWPD. Johannah's effective communication skills enable her to convey the cold, hard facts to a victim with a blend of clarity, compassion, and genuine concern while also maintaining strong respectful relationships with the officers who readily use her on their cases. Through the persistent practice of empathy and understanding, Johannah is able to build strong relationships with victims to help ensure their justice and healing.

Judge Maria Elena Cruz currently serves on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One and has done so since 2017. She has an extensive background in the justice system; having served as a prosecutor, a criminal defense attorney, a judge pro tem for the Cocopah Indian Tribe, Superior Court Judge and presiding Judge in Yuma County. While judges commonly walk a balanced line, few distinguish themselves in advancing and safeguarding victims' rights. However, Judge Cruz is an exception in this regard. As a long-term member on the Arizona Supreme Court's Commission on Victims in the Courts, Judge Cruz brings forth excellent ideas and has been an exemplary leader in advancing the right to restitution for crime victims. She has been the primary advocate for restitution courts in Arizona, which has led to her standing as a mentor to other judges and probation officials. Furthering her advocacy for victims' rights and restitution, Judge Cruz is a champion of efforts to educate all stakeholders in the criminal justice system about the importance of restitution. A clear goal of Judge Cruz's is to address victims' rights and challenges in a fair, objective and balanced manner and, as such, exemplifies the qualities of a true leader in victims' rights.

Leadership

The Honorable
Maria Elena Cruz
Arizona Court of Appeals



Innovative Practices

ACASI

*Arizona Child and Adolescent
Survivor Initiative*



The Arizona Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative (ACASI) is a program in the Arizona State University (ASU) School of Social Work Family Violence Center. It offers comprehensive services, free of charge, to children affected by intimate partner homicide and their caregivers. Established in 2016, the initiative is led by Dr. Bianca Harper, Clinical Associate Professor, ASU School of Social Work. ACASI's primary goal is to facilitate the healing process for survivors of intimate partner violence. With the collaboration of victim advocates, volunteers, and mentors, ACASI delivers a wide range of services tailored to each client's unique circumstances. Notably, the initiative leverages technology to provide essential equipment and internet access for virtual services, ensuring the accessibility for individuals residing outside the Phoenix metropolitan area. Moreover, ACASI actively engages with statewide agencies, governmental agencies, and nonprofit organizations to enhance community outreach. The services, resources, and support given by ACASI are unmatched. The program's dedication to innovation is evident in its continuous efforts to expand its reach through technological advancements, community partnerships, and grant funding. The invaluable services, resources and support provided by ACASI remain unparalleled as it strives to further its impact and outreach.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety General Investigation Unit (DPS GIU) is housed under the Southern Investigations District, Criminal Investigations Division of DPS. It encompasses non-traffic related offenses that occur in the Pima and Santa Cruz Counties to safeguard the public by deterring crime through the utilization of innovative investigative techniques and specialized enforcement strategies. Providing support to other federal, state, tribal, and local criminal justice agencies, typically in response to organized crime; DPS GIU consists of investigators who have specialized experience in all crime types and embody a victim-centered approach in conducting their investigations, going above and beyond in matters of homicide, domestic violence and sex crimes. Sergeant Russell Bocks, Detectives Jake Engel, Josh Everhart, Dave Morts, and Chris Manns, Trooper John Barbeau, and Deputy United States Marshal Jennifer Rippey exemplified passion and perseverance in the highly complex investigation and prosecution of two co-defendants for a homicide, with the intent of connecting victims with resources, information and healing. The work done for this case illustrated an exceptional level of service coordination with multiple agencies. This case exemplifies how each and every member of the GIU goes above what is expected to show their continuous care for victims and their families.

Service Coordination

General Investigation Unit

*Arizona Department of Public Safety
Pima/Santa Cruz Counties*



Arizona Department of Public Safety General Investigation Unit members:

Sergeant Russell Bocks, Trooper John Barbeau, Detective Jake Engel, Detective Josh Everhart, Detective Dave Morts, Detective Chris Manns, and Deputy United States Marshal Jennifer Rippey.

**NATIONAL CRIME
VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK**

April 21-27, 2024

**HOW WOULD
YOU HELP?**

**Options, services
and hope for
crime survivors.**

Courage In Action

Kim Brysselbout
Parents of Murdered Children



Kim Brysselbout has served as the local chapter leader of Parents of Murdered Children’s (POMC) Valley of the Sun for three years. Her daughter, Savannah Jean Walker, was murdered in an art gallery in 2016. As a survivor, Kim utilizes her firsthand experiences to be an advocate for victims’ rights, share her journey, and act as an inspiration and support to other survivors. Kim shows dedication to victims’ rights and support through her regular visits with callers on the 24-hour POMC Valley of the Sun phone line, giving passionate, resourceful support. Kim helps others through their journey through her compassion, acceptance, and hope. She has organized fundraisers, attended conferences, and has appeared on local television stations to promote national remembrance holidays for loved ones lost to acts of violence. She generously shares her knowledge with survivors and is a trusted name when survivors call for help. On behalf of her daughter, Savannah, Kim has truly dedicated her advocacy to support victims and survivors.

The Navajo Nation spans across Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, covering over 27,000 square miles of unparalleled beauty. Within the Navajo Nation Council Chambers, 88 council delegates represent the 110 Navajo Nation Chapters. Dr. Buu Nygren, EdD, was elected the 10th President of the Navajo Nation in 2022. President Nygren enacted the Navajo Nation Victims’ Rights Act (VRA) of 2023 on September 6th, 2023, a pivotal law designed to offer protection and support to victims of sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, and other violent offenses as they seek justice. The VRA serves as a vital cornerstone, indicating to victims and their families that their voices are valued and their concerns are acknowledged by lawmakers and community members alike. Specifically, the VRA provides clear definitions for terms such as "victim" and "advocate," as well as establishes the meaning of "without consent" in cases of sexual assault and rape. Navajo Nation Council Delegate Amber Crotty emphasized the significance of this legislation, highlighting how it empowers victims by affirming their rights within the Navajo Nation and granting them access to essential resources and to advocates that assist with navigating the justice system. With this law, the Navajo Nation demonstrates its commitment to giving victims a voice and offering unwavering support as they navigate through the legal process.

Public Policy

Navajo Nation
Arizona Navajo Nation



Victims' Rights Education

Stay informed about upcoming Basic and Advanced presentations offered through the OVS Victims' Rights Education Program. See below for registration details.

Basic Victims' Rights:

May 13th, 2024

June 17th, 2024

Advanced Victims' Rights:

May 14th, 2024

June 18th, 2024

Participants are reminded of their training obligations within the Victims' Rights Education Program. It is mandatory to complete the Basic Victims' Rights course every 5 years. Additionally, systems-based practitioners should engage in the Advanced Victims' Rights course annually, with community-based practitioners encouraged to attend yearly as well. For more details, to request a training and to register for courses, please visit <https://www.azag.gov/criminal/victim-services/training>.



If you have questions, suggestions, or an idea for an article, please contact Ryan Clark at (602) 542-8848 or by email at Ryan.clark@azag.gov

Arizona Attorney General's Office of Victim Services Information

Phoenix Victim Service's Office:

Mainline: 602-542-4911

Fax: 602-542-8453

2005 N. Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ, 85004



Tucson Victim Service's Office:

Mainline: 520-628-6459

Fax: 520-628-6566

400 W Congress, S-315, Tucson, AZ, 85701

Victims' Rights Program (VRP): Email OVSVRP@azag.gov for questions or information related to the Arizona VRP Program.

Victims' Rights Compliance: Email VictimRights@azag.gov for questions or information related to Arizona Victims' Rights Compliance.

Training and Education: Reach out to OVSTraining@azag.gov for information about the vicarious victims' rights trainings or education opportunities provided by the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office is dedicated to a system of justice that is inclusive of crime victims and will remain vigilant in striving to provide the most efficient and effective service to the people of Arizona.

For more information and resources about the Arizona Attorney General's Office, please visit: azag.gov