

PFJCI
Monthly

BULLETIN



Welcome

As of this month, the President's Family Justice Center Initiative is almost halfway toward its goal of creating 15 Family Justice Centers across the United States. For some of you, there are many challenges still ahead before doors are opened and clients are served. For others, a whole new set of challenges arise on a day to day basis as you meet the needs of victims who seek services. For all of us, we're doing something new, something untried, something historically different. Phil Keith, in the enclosed interview, tells us that he called on his officers to, "be a hero every day." If you are reading this PFJCI Monthly Bulletin on a regular basis, it's a good chance that you already are a hero. Every day.

News from Technical Assistance Providers

National Network to End Domestic Violence

The Safety Net team visited Sitka, Alaska in February to provide the two day Technology Safety training for FJC partners. We're currently having conversations with each site to ensure that they're receiving any follow-up support or technology safety trainings they'd like. As always, we encourage sites to email us at SafetyNet@nedv.org with any question - big or small.

TA Providers on the Web

For more information about the Technical Assistance providers, be sure to see photos and read qualifications on the PFJCI Website under the Staff tab. You can request technical assistance using a form available on each location site and in the Library/Official documents under the OVW section. www.familyjusticecenter.org/pfjci
Login: PFJCI, password: safe.

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Produced by

The San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation's PFJCI TA Team.

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Site Insight: Tri-County Northeast NM & Ouachita Parish, LA

Tri-County Family Justice Center of Northeast New Mexico

"I think we've done two years' worth of work in the last four months," said Chris Sanchez, executive director of the newly-named Tri-County Family Justice Center of Northeast New Mexico. "I was hired at the end of October and hit the ground running. The backbone leadership of Robert Archuleta from the Children, Youth and Families Department of the State of New Mexico and support of Anna Lucero of Somos Familia held everything together while I went full steam ahead."

Sanchez' first order of business was to meet individually with each FJC partner to re-engage them in the FJC plan. "I let them know what I was looking for in a partner and what we could offer them," said Sanchez. "Then I brought them together as a team and reiterated the mission and the vision. We divided into committees and are putting the final touches on various tasks related to the opening of the Center."

Next Sanchez toured the rural communities around Las Vegas, where he grew up, introducing himself to civic leaders. After that, he met with all the stakeholders, elected officials, state legislators, and New Mexico's First Lady Barbara Richardson, wife of Gov. Bill Richardson. This round of meetings brought the support of the FJC to the point of creating a plan to secure a building and expanding the name to Tri-County.

Sanchez feels that an important element in their FJC plan is the input of the victims. "We could build a state-of-the-art program," he said, "But without their input, it's just a program. They are reviewing all of our policies and procedures and play an important part in our planning."

"It's wonderful to see everyone working together, now that we are working as a team," said Sanchez.

Their rules of engagement include putting hidden agendas aside and focusing all discussion around the victims and the mission.

"The partnership of all the entities has come to life and you can feel the synergy," said Sanchez.

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PFJCI Website

Site Products

Under the Library tab of the PFJCI Website is a section for Site-produced Products. Here we would like to share what has created success at your site with others in the PFJCI. Did you have a successful event? A great idea for a partner-meeting agenda? Have you created a unique brochure or fact sheet about your FJC and its programs?

Please submit your electronic versions of these to Jennifer@sdfjc.org in Adobe .pdf, Word, or Publisher formats and we will add these to the Library, subject to OVW approval.

And don't forget to register for the Message Board and check out the questions from other sites. You might have just the answer they're looking for.

www.familyjusticecenter.org/pfjci

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Get involved!

If you have news items for the Monthly Bulletin, please submit them to Jennifer Bodine by the 10th of each month at Jennifer@sdfjc.org and we will include them in the next bulletin, subject to OVW final approval.

If you would like to subscribe directly to the Monthly Bulletin, please email Jennifer@sdfjc.org and write "Monthly Bulletin Subscription" in the subject line.

Site Insight, continued

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Ouachita Parish Family Justice Center, Monroe, Louisiana

Open since October 12, 2005, the Ouachita Parish Family Justice Center, has seen, “slow days and then really, really busy days,” according to Executive Director Tammie Slawson. The Center’s original opening day was eclipsed by Hurricane Katrina, which has had a continuing impact on the Family Justice Center.

“I, personally, went through training in Florida on hurricane recovery,” said Slawson, “and from what we learned from their experience of having eight major hurricanes in 18 months, I truly feel that domestic violence will be on the rise as a long-term effect of the disaster. Our lead agency, Well-spring, is participating in many of the relief efforts and there are FEMA trailer parks going up everywhere. We’re gearing up for it.” The state of Louisiana had 20 DV programs operating and four were affected directly by the disaster, with two shelters completely destroyed. Ouachita Parish is a five-hour drive from New Orleans.

Slawson’s 14 years of experience in DV helped her view the work of the FJC as a series of manageable challenges.

“Looking back, we didn’t have a clue what we were getting into,” she said, “but for the most part, we have been blessed not to have too many obstacles. We have a wonderful program and it’s been a true community effort. The strategic planning has been the best.”

Surprises included the unexpected support of the judges and the judicial system as a whole. They have been insistent on being part of the steering committee and turning awareness into concrete change. As a result of this involvement, there has been increased court security for victims and Slawson reported that Ouachita Parish is very, very close to having a “virtual” court where victims can actually testify from within the FJC. She predicts it will be in place within six months.

“We need to continue to educate our partners and do more community outreach,” said Slawson. “So many still think that the only help out there is a shelter. We shortened our partner meetings and now pass out briefings by the partners in advance of getting together to save our meeting for issues such as the flow of services and how the actions and decisions we make affect victims.”

The FJC now has 50 graduates from the volunteer academy and six clergy, including an Hispanic pastor and female lay pastor, who had an active DV ministry at her church.

“She had an incident with a perpetrator on the church property, so we made the FJC available to her for the ministry. We gained a chaplain and she gained a secure environment,” said Slawson.

Slawson and FJC partner Eletha Hobson, Outreach Coordinator of the FJC and a survivor of DV, conducted a training the last week of February for every single officer of the Monroe City Police Department, a week-long effort to cover every shift. The training request came from the PD. “They had received previous training about the laws and system of reporting, but they wanted to see the whole thing from a victim perspective. They wanted to see the heart of the people that are being victimized,” said Slawson.

“The difference in the officer’s attitudes when they enter the training and when they leave is remarkable,” said Hobson. “I can visibly see it in their expressions when ‘the light goes on’ as I tell my story and answer their questions.”

Officers were given FJC referral palm cards to pass along to victims they see in the course of their duties. FJC steering committee members Renee Smith, DV Investigator for the Ouachita Parish Sheriff’s Dept. and Holly Chambers, Assistant DA, are in the process of training every officer in the West Monroe Police Department (WMPD) as well. Director Tammie Slawson and Eletha Hobson had previously trained them on the dynamics of DV in 2005. The WMPD Chief of Police, Christopher Elg, recently told a reporter that DV would be a priority issue for their department in 2006.

“We’ve seen DV homicides in our county go from 7 in 2003 to 1 in 2005 and seen the criminal justice system really bear down on DV,” noted Slawson. “I believe that lives are being saved as a result of the increased coordinated community response.”

Ouachita Parish is very, very close to having a “virtual” court where victims can actually testify from within the Family Justice Center.

Spotlight On: Phil Keith

PFJCI faculty

Each issue of the Monthly Bulletin will highlight a PFCJI faculty member.

Phil Keith has more than 35 years of experience in the fields of criminal justice, public safety, and business administration. Under his leadership as Chief, the Knoxville Police Department became the first in the United States to receive international accreditation in law enforcement, training academy, and public safety communications. He has been recognized for establishing national demonstration projects for community policing, domestic violence, highway safety, crime prevention, violent crime reduction, Internet crimes against children, and juvenile justice initiatives. These innovative initiatives led to the development and establishment of the National Forensic Academy at the University of Tennessee. He has received numerous awards and widespread recognition for his efforts. Since his retirement in 2004, Keith has worked as the Program Manager for the DOJ AMBER Alert Initiative, Director for Community and Government Affairs for the Tennessee Association for Chiefs of Police, and as National Faculty for the PFJCI.



In my early days as a street officer, I saw a good deal of family violence, battering and child abuse. One night I was called to one of the most affluent neighborhoods in our community. The scene was the same that I had seen in poorer neighborhoods, but with a significant difference - the victim had taken an incredible amount of abuse before she was convinced that she could actually be killed. The department had the same attitude and treated Domestic Violence as a social/civil issue rather than a criminal one at the time. I felt like trying to garner support was like trying to get guests on the Titanic to change ships.

When I became Chief of Police in 1988, I started to make DV part of my mission. I started meeting with folks around the state then started lobbying, testifying before elected officials, and then drafted legislation on mandatory reporting and arrest, which passed in 1993.

Like any initiative, the dynamics in a community have much to do with success and failure. We had an incredible tragedy where a fellow who was a construction worker commuting to a job in Ohio became convinced his wife was unfaithful. One weekend he came home, went into the house and killed his wife, his three children, and then himself. That woke up our community. In the fatality review, it was revealed that she had been a victim before and had tried to get a restraining order, but there had been no coordinated response of services.

Even when people are motivated, it's not easy. I was just in a meeting about DV where everyone came to me with their policy manuals saying why they couldn't work together. I've seen officers, sheriffs, chiefs, and advocates be so resistant to changing historical rifts and territories. It takes a long time to change core beliefs.

It's going to be a significant challenge to create a simple and straightforward assessment tool and protocol. The beat cops say, "I have to make decisions in 15 minutes," so we have to make it understandable for first responders and for victims, too. In Knoxville, there was not a day that went by when we didn't respond to hundreds of DV calls. We challenged our officers to be a hero every day.

The impact of the PFJCI will be as an anecdotal model. The successes will breed offshoots. Is it going to look the same in ten years, with co-location, multi-agency response and shared staff? I don't think you can stop managing and providing improvements. But law enforcement is taking a lot of hits as terrorism has taken the front seat and strategies have shifted to intelligence gathering. Local police need to stick to their mission and continue to be full service responders. There are issues such as drugs and alcohol that circle the core issues of violence, so we need to become more comprehensive and less compartmentalized.

Leadership is not easy, and if anyone tells you it is, get suspicious. But be a problem-solver. It takes a lot of moral courage to be compassionate and consistent and stay focused. Be a hero.