



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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National Crime Victims' Rights Week Recognized In Franklin County

This week, April 18 – 24, communities throughout the nation will rally to honor and support victims of crime. With the theme, *Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.*, 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week will recall the ideals that inspired the decades-long struggle of the victims' rights movement and challenge all Americans to honor victims' rights.

As of 2010, every state has passed victims' rights laws, has victim compensation funds, and in Franklin County dozens of victim assistance programs exist. Such changes have made victims participants, rather than bystanders, in the criminal justice system.

Yet much work remains. "We must work to ensure fair treatment of crime victims by providing protections for child and sexual assault victims, ordering and enforcing victim restitution from offenders, and notifying victims of their right to compensation and services, thereby giving hope to victims that the system and society will work to restore dignity and respect their needs and rights," said Commissioner John O'Grady.

Franklin County has numerous community resources available to help victims of all crime. Victims are often unsure where to turn when they have been violated or they may be afraid of what will happen to them, their families or their perpetrator.

The community agencies available are sensitive to culture issues and have experience working with the diverse population of Franklin County.

"We must insist that Victims Rights apply to every victim, every time. As an advocate for domestic violence victims for over thirty years, I am very aware of the need to ensure that victims know their rights, particularly our children," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Our youth are more victimized than any other age group, and they must receive the full protection of the law and the services to help them recover from violent crimes."

One of the most frequently occurring types of violent crime, accounting for more than 25% of violent crime against women, is intimate partner domestic violence. According to the Columbus

Coalition Against Family Violence, in 2007, the Columbus Division of Police responded to approximately 23,000 domestic violence calls and over 80% of violent crime offenders were raised in homes where Domestic Violence occurred. Acknowledging a crime's impact on individuals, families, and communities ensures that victims are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect as they interact with the criminal justice system.

“The 2010 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week reignites the passion for fairness, dignity, and respect that launched the victims’ rights movement and inspired decades-long progress for victims of crime. By heeding its message, we chart a course for stronger rights and better services in the decades ahead,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown.

Victims of violent crime or domestic violence should call the 24-hr CHOICES hotline at 614-224-4663 or visit the Ohio Domestic Violence Network at www.odvn.org for a full list of Central Ohio resources for Adult, Child, Teen and Senior victims.

The Columbus Coalition Against Family Violence has published wallet-sized resource cards available to anyone in Central Ohio. About the size of a library or credit card, they easily fit in wallets, shoes and pockets. The cards contain information about how to protect yourself from abuse; as well as ways to help others who may be abused. They list phone numbers for many excellent social service resources in Central Ohio. Employers, medical professionals, attorneys, law enforcement officials, member of social service agencies, and religious leaders in Central Ohio, are encouraged to order the wallet-sized cards by visiting <http://www.ccafvs.org/contact/generalinfo.php>.

“As organizations, friends and family members, we must create a culture that does not tolerate crime against victims, no matter the kind or severity. National Crime Victims’ Rights Week gives us an avenue to raise awareness on how far we have come and how much further we have to go,” said Karen S. Days, President of the Columbus Coalition Against Family Violence and Interim President of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy.

In recognition of the 21 million Americans who suffer the indignity of crime each year and may experience emotional, physical, psychological, and financial harm as a result of such crime; there will be a Silhouette Memorial on display in the lobby of the Franklin County Courthouse beginning on Monday, April 19 thru Friday, April 23. The Silhouette Memorial will contain a visual representation of community members impacted by crime and a full list of resources available to help crime victims.