

Turn on the news, log on to your computer, or scan the radio and it's more than likely you'll learn about our community's latest crime. Crime is the stuff of headlines. Crime is sensational. Crime is heinous. Crime is bizarre. Whether an identity is stolen, a life taken, or a local convenience store is robbed, crime leaves everyone -- victims, families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and entire communities, feeling less secure.

Sadly, the impact of crime is felt long after the reporters and news cameras have disappeared. National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) offers a chance to look beyond the sensational and call attention to the fact that crime affects not only victims, but everyone. The 2008 NCVRW theme, "Justice for Victims, Justice for All" suggests that because anyone can become a victim of crime, every citizen has a powerful stake in victims' rights.

In Cumberland County, the office of the District Attorney has no more important duty than to protect the rights of crime victims. We recognize every day the mandate of the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Bill of Rights that requires us to treat victims of crime with dignity, respect, courtesy and sensitivity. As District Attorney, my most important duty is to be the most outspoken advocate for law-abiding citizens. Let's face it -- criminals have plenty of advocates both paid and unpaid. I do not believe that I was elected to make apologies for criminals. I was elected to seek justice and continue the proud tradition of serving crime victims in Cumberland County.

That is why the Victim/Witness Assistance Unit of the Cumberland County District Attorney's Office continues to work every day along with community providers such as Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry County, Carlisle YWCA Rape Crisis Services and Mid Penn Legal Services on projects such as our Victim's Service Agencies of Cumberland County West Shore office -- a project that resulted in the 2002 Governor's Pathfinder Award. That is why Cumberland County victim advocates served crime victims at 1083 preliminary hearings in 2007. That is why our office hosted 601 victims and witnesses attending hearings and trials in 2007. And that is why our advocates gained approval for restitution in the amount of \$171,772.51 to be paid directly to crime victims from the Pennsylvania Victim's Compensation Fund.

When we recognize and act on the rights of victims, we promote justice -- not only for the victim but for our entire community.

Recently, Cumberland County seized a new opportunity to recognize the rights of victims and promote justice for all of our citizens through automated victim notification. Pennsylvania's Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification service or PA SAVIN, is an innovative tool that will help us enhance the rights of victims by uniting the power of technology with the very important personal and emotional connection between victims, victims' families, and their circles of support.

Through PA SAVIN, any crime victim and other concerned citizen can have access to free, prompt, and confidential notification regarding a county inmate's release, transfer, or escape. PA SAVIN provides users access to timely and reliable information about particular offenders 24-hours a day--over the

phone, through the Internet, or by e-mail. To register confidentially, all a person has to do is log on to www.pacrimevictims.state.pa.us or call 1-866-9PA-SAVIN.

What does that mean for victims of crime? A mother whose child has been physically or sexually abused can call in every night so her child can sleep easily with the knowledge his perpetrator remains behind bars. A domestic violence victim can put a safety plan into action after receiving a heads up call when an abusive spouse is about to be released. A victim of stalking can have family, friends and co-workers sign up so they too can become instantly aware when the stalker is out of jail and mobilize support. Relatives and friends of crime victims, arresting police officers and other interested citizens can use PA SAVIN without fear of retaliation.

Cumberland County brought PA SAVIN on-line in January, 2008. In that short period of time, thousands of requests for information have been made through SAVIN. The use of SAVIN has exceeded our most optimistic projections. It is my hope, that those who are using the PA SAVIN service find some peace of mind.

With PA SAVIN and our other programs, Cumberland County is able to maximize resources and maximize our reach – seeking justice for victims and justice for all.

During National Crime Victims Rights Week, I invite the citizens of Cumberland County to join with me in recognizing that advocacy for the rights of law abiding citizens strengthens our entire community. And remember that true justice requires making victims whole.