



Help and Healing for  
Victims of Violence

## Witness Justice e-Newsletter

May 2008

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WJ's Virtual Training  
Academy

Western Massachusetts police officer honored with award for  
"Outstanding Victim Advocacy"

He seems a little uncomfortable and perhaps embarrassed with the title "hero," despite the fact that many consider what Officer David Rice does for a living as "heroic." That is why Rice, a nine-year veteran of the Greenfield, Massachusetts, Police Department and father of two, received the "Criminal Justice Award for Outstanding Victim Advocacy" from the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.

"I have an expertise, but I'm doing my job - something I enjoy doing," the modest police officer says. His job, though, may just save lives. He is Greenfield's domestic abuse expert, and over his tenure with the small, Western Massachusetts community, he has seen cases running the spectrum of abuse from the moderate to the excessive. In one case, after an

Helga West,  
President & CEO  
of Witness Justice  
will present  
[TRAUMA 101](#)

Tuesday, June 24, 2008  
2-3 pm EST

The one hour training  
session is \$75 per  
participant.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register!

V-Training

### California Guitar Trio Benefit Concert

Witness Justice will be  
presenting a benefit concert  
by the [California Guitar Trio](#)  
on Tuesday, October 21,  
2008 at 8:00 pm, EST. The  
concert will be held at All  
Saints Episcopal Church in  
Frederick, MD.



Tickets are \$20.00 per  
person and proceeds will  
benefit Witness Justice  
programs and services. For  
more information and to  
purchase your tickets  
[Click Here](#).

Quick Links

argument, a husband murdered his wife by clubbing her with a two-by-four. A small town with a population of approximately 22,000, Greenfield is the county seat and witnesses a fair amount of domestic violence, with around 150 arrests last year.

Rice, who works closely with victim advocates and the district attorney, plays a crucial role in safeguarding victims as a domestic abuse consultant. Much of his work involves identifying the "predominant aggressor" and the victim in abuse incidents—a critical job made necessary by "dual arrests."

In many domestic abuse cases, both participants will claim to have been assaulted. Typically, though, one is the assailant and the other is the victim, who sometimes uses a "weapon of opportunity" for protection. Sometimes, tell tale clues give away the true assailant's identity. Husbands who habitually beat their wives, for example, will often remove their rings.

Good investigation will show who did what, although the evidence can sometimes be misleading, which makes accurate determinations difficult. A bite mark may appear to be an aggressive, offensive wound, but in reality, since many domestic violence cases involve non-fatal strangulation, the victim may bite the aggressor in defense.

To avoid mistakes, most states, Rice explains, provide police officers with guidelines for determining the identity of the "predominant aggressor" in a domestic abuse scenario. Massachusetts is not one of them, so bewildered police officers will frequently arrest both individuals and let the courts sort out the specifics. Except in cases involving "mutual combat," this practice is discouraged because of unforeseen side effects such as arrests may create. Nonetheless, Rice discovered during a federally funded research project, many cases (between 7%-15%; the national rate is 1.49% for domestic violence cases) resulted in "dual arrest."

Yet these "dual arrests," Rice explains, are very dangerous because they can further victimize the victim. An arrest can actually deter a victim from reporting future incidents for fear of another arrest. And it has happened that social services will be called, and victims face the loss of custody over their children. To make a bad situation worse, defense attorneys also discourage victims from talking to victim's advocates, because victims "have been branded criminals" and are often defendants in subsequent court action. All due to "dual arrests."

Other research indicated "dual arrests" occur because police officers lack the specialized training they need to determine the "predominant aggressor" in domestic abuse cases. Rice, who holds an MS in Criminal Justice, received specialized training in domestic violence prevention and is certified to teach domestic violence classes, which he does at a law enforcement training academy.

[Witness Justice Home](#)  
[Team Heal Trauma](#)  
[National Center for](#)  
[Trauma-Informed Care](#)  
[Office on Violence](#)  
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**SHOP TODAY FOR WJ!**

The crystal plaque that now resides in Officer David Rice's home bears mute testimony to his work with victims of domestic abuse, but the true measure of his work transcends any material award.

In this community, the next victim can race to the telephone and without hesitation tap the three numbers that will summon help to her residence, because thanks largely to Rice's efforts, the blue uniform represents a helping hand and not another slap with an errant trip through the criminal justice system.

### College Campuses: The Safest Cities in America? Sort of ...

Are college campuses the safest cities in America? A recent study indicates that they are - sort of.

On the average American public college campus with a population of 10,000, each year just six residents would become the victims of violent crimes. This eye-popping statistic emerged from the first survey on campus law enforcement conducted by the Bureau of Justice since the 1994-1995 school year. According to the survey, violent crime dropped nine percent.

These numbers make college campuses appear to be much safer than several US cities. Based on 2006 statistics, in Washington, DC, approximately 145 of every 10,000 residents became victims of rape, murder, aggravated assault, or robbery. Even Seattle, whose police department prides itself for making the city "one of the safest major cities in the US," averages six to seven violent crimes for every 1,000 residents, or sixty per 10,000-ten times the number experienced on the average American public college campus!

Much of the credit for the decrease in campus crime goes to campus law enforcement agencies and the methods they employ. Many of the larger campuses enjoy a favorable student-to-safety-officer ratio. Most four-year colleges employ at least twenty law enforcement officers per 1,000 students, and several benefit from even better ratios. In addition to their "sworn" personnel, many campus law-enforcement agencies also employ "non-sworn" staff who handle ancillary duties such as event security and building / parking monitoring. This frees up the time of "sworn" personnel to patrol, answer complaints, and investigate crimes.

Another factor that almost surely led to a drop in violent crime was the prevalence of campus safety measures; almost all of the campuses

## Lights! Camera! Advocacy!

John Walsh, host of television's ***America's Most Wanted***, and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Addiction, Treatment and Recovery, appear in a 4-minute informational video on Witness Justice. [Click here](#) to view the video.

## eBay for WJ!

[Lukas Rossi](#) is performing at Coach House Capistrano in San Juan Capistrano on June 20, 2008.



[Click here](#) to bid on VIP tickets and dinner before the show ... a portion of the proceeds will benefit Witness Justice!

## Verizon Velocity

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employed preventive measures to curtail violent crimes. Almost all four-year colleges used 24-hour patrol services, three-digit emergency numbers, and blue-light emergency phones.

Campus law-enforcement agencies also devote a significant portion of their duties to education and training programs and often employ specially trained personnel for this purpose. Seventy-eight percent of four-year, public colleges, for example, either addressed rape prevention or designated personnel to deal with rape prevention. And almost all campuses surveyed provided crime prevention education. In these ways, campus cops differ greatly from their "real world" counterparts. City police generally do not employ "non-sworn" officers, nor do they spend as much time educating the public.

These comparisons and the statistics suggest that college campuses are the safest cities in America. But are they, really? The statistics may be misleading. The drop in crime on college campuses, while dramatic, is consistent with decreases occurring in cities across America. According to the FBI's crime statistics for the first half of 2007, America witnessed a dip in both violent and property crimes.

Another fact, which emerged from the National Crime Victimization Survey, another US Department of Justice project, suggests that college campuses aren't nearly as safe as the numbers make them appear. College students were much less likely than students off campus to report violent crimes. In fact, just over a third of all violent crimes involving college students were reported in the period between 1995-2002. In the "real world," about half of all violent crimes were reported.

Why the large number of unreported violent crimes on campuses? Most college students chose to not involve authorities because they considered incidents as private or personal matters, or because they did not consider the crimes as crimes but instead as insignificant, minor issues.

Tragically, many of the unreported incidents likely involve sexual assault. In a college society where alcohol and other substances are prevalent, date rape occurs at an alarming rate, yet many of these likely go unreported and thus unpunished. The fact that a majority of sexual assault victims reported knowing their assailants suggests a disturbing, but likely, scenario, and with it, an explanation for the "non reporting."

She knows him, sort of - he's a friend of a friend. He brings her a can of beer, open, but what harm is there in an open can of beer? What she doesn't know is that he spiked it with GHB-the premier date rape drug-and the rest of the night is a blur. What happened? She doesn't know for sure. All she knows is that the next morning came with a blinding

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and give  
**Tracking Code:12250**

headache and flu-like symptoms. Even if something happened, which she isn't sure happened at all, she knows him, sort of, and he seems like such a nice guy. He wouldn't do such a thing, would he? Besides, going to authorities would just lead to a he-said, she-said (or rather a he-said, she-couldn't-quite-say) scenario, and she would look foolish. Even if authorities could find some evidence, what would they do to him?

Besides, college campuses are the safest cities in America - sort of.

### Board Member Profile of the Month

*Kathleen O'Hara*

A strong woman who has had to survive the loss of a child to a violent crime, Kathleen O'Hara has many reasons to move forward and continue living. From the loss of Aaron, her eldest son, she has found the compassion and understanding to help others who have endured traumatic loss.



In the summer of 1999 Aaron, who was a resident student at the Franciscan University in Stubenville, Ohio, and his friend, Brian, abruptly went missing and their murdered bodies found three days later. Kathleen - as any loved one would, struggled to cope with her devastation and with how she would begin to heal from her loss. She eventually found solace in writing a book about the success of her healing journey. The book, [A Grief Like No Other: Surviving the Violent Death of Someone You Love](#), presents a seven stage model to guide survivors of murder victims through their loss.

Kathleen enjoys life today - something she never anticipated after Aaron's murder. She travels, loves to take long walks, and visit the ocean. The ocean is the metaphor for the journey of grief in her book, and it has helped her to heal and learn to live again.

Kathleen has been a member of the Board of Witness Justice since April 2007 and consistently lends her expertise and leadership skills in refining and implementing key programs and services for the organization. She feels that the most important advocacy and public education issues related to WJ's work are raising public awareness and promoting trauma-informed care. To Kathleen, "...raising public awareness on behalf of victims is important. Don't forget about us, we need your care and support so that we, the victims can become victorious..." As a psychotherapist, she actively continues to develop approaches in health

and healing, especially for victims.

She has also been a strong supporter of Team Heal Trauma, WJ's charity running team, who she followed to the Marine Corp Marathon last fall in Arlington, VA.

## Changing Systems, Changing Lives

Have you thought about how things need to change in this country? Been frustrated with the family law system? Thought about how different approaches would serve survivors better? Next month we will be launching a new column called Changing Systems, Changing Lives in our newsletter. The column will be done collaboratively with you - our reader. We want to hear what kind of change you think is most needed. Send your great ideas to [editor@witnessjustice.org](mailto:editor@witnessjustice.org) to have your ideas considered for the column.

## Useful Resources

### **Crisis Counselors Needed**

*Comprehensive Health Services Looking for Specialists*

[Comprehensive Health Services, Inc.](#) (CHS) is a leader in providing onsite health centers and national examination programs to the health industry. Currently the CHS Behavioral Health Unit is seeking Crisis Counselors to join their Behavioral Health Provider Network. Many opportunities are available, including on-site crisis counseling, on-site call center, virtual call center, and Crisis Team Membership. To submit an application, please forward your resume, attached as a Word document only, and contact information to [Paige Valdiserri](#), LPC, NCC, BCETS.

### **VictimLaw National Database Empowers Crime Victims**

*After Its One Year Anniversary, the Database Continues to Expand*

The free database [VictimLaw](#), launched last year by The National Center for Victims of Crime with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, is a valuable resource that victims can utilize to obtain information at the federal, state, tribal, and territorial levels about crime victim's rights and protections. The comprehensive site offers, among other features, a legal glossary, a detailed explanation of the justice system, an overview of victim's rights, and links to other helpful resources like organizations, hotlines, and specific information on

each state. Here, crime victims can find statutes, tribal laws, constitutional amendments, case summaries of court decisions, court rules, and administrative code provisions that can guide them in their journey toward justice and inform them of how to exercise their rights.

The most recent addition to the VictimLaw website is a tutorial for users that instructs on the most efficient and thorough ways to access the information and resources available. There are a number of ways to search the site, including by topic, term, citation, and contents, making the on-line database very user friendly and much less time consuming than the former search method of having to visit a legal library.

**Associated Press** - [Anonymous Rape Tests are Going Nationwide](#)

**Center for Disease Control** - [Non-Fatal Maltreatment of Infants](#)

**National Center on Elder Abuse** - [Mandatory Reports](#)

**Office for Victims of Crime** - [Resources for Victimization Abroad](#)

### Where We've Been...

May 1 - Helga West presented a workshop titled "Stuck on the Road to Recovery: Untreated Trauma" at the [National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare](#) in Boston, MA.

May 6 - Helga West presented at the [Council on Foundations](#) Summit on Disaster and Crisis Recovery in Washington, DC.

May 7 - Sleep expert Dr. Barry Krakow presented "PTSD and Sleep Disorders" through the [Witness Justice Online Training Academy](#)

### Calendar of Events

**June 16** - International Study for Traumatic Stress Studies symposium on "Interventions for Traumatized Populations: An Expert Update" at College of Physicians - London, UK [http://www.istss.org/resources/uk\\_symp.cfm](http://www.istss.org/resources/uk_symp.cfm)

**June 24** - Witness Justice Virtual Training Academy - Trauma 101 - Trauma and Trauma Informed Care training session presented by Helga West

<http://www.WitnessJustice.org>

**July 11-12** - National Center for Trauma Informed Care's "Dare to Transform" meeting at The Phoenix Park Hotel - Washington, DC [http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic/newsletter\\_12-2007.asp#dare](http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic/newsletter_12-2007.asp#dare)

**November 13-15** - International Study for Traumatic Stress Studies meeting on "Terror in the Aftermath" meeting at The Palmer House Hilton - Chicago, IL

<http://www.istss.org/meetings/index.cfm>

*Witness Justice is a national, grassroots, nonprofit organization created by survivors for survivors. Our mission is to offer advocacy and support to victims of violence and trauma. Witness Justice offers support regardless of where a victim lives, when or where the crime occurred, or whether the crime was ever reported. For more information, visit [www.WitnessJustice.org](http://www.WitnessJustice.org).*



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