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## Witness Justice Revamps Strategic Vision for Greater Impact

*Nonprofit expands programs and staff to focus on trauma-informed care issues at federal level*

**Washington, DC** - Witness Justice recently unveiled a new strategic vision for 2008 that expands its efforts beyond assistance for individual victims of violence. The nonprofit organization has added programs and staff to focus on a national campaign addressing psychological trauma as a growing public health issue and the need for improved support and services for survivors across the country.

"While maintaining a solid commitment to our original mission to address gaps that victims experience at the local level, we've recognized the necessity of putting our limited time, energy and resources to work at a higher level so we can take the issue farther and affect the greatest amount of change for the good of all trauma survivors," noted Helga West, president of Witness Justice.

West, herself a survivor of a brutal attempted murder, founded the organization in 2001. Since then, Witness Justice has grown to become one of the most sought-after victim services organizations in the country. As such, the group has increasingly received offers to participate in congressional briefings, expert advisory groups, and government agency programs.

"Our new strategic plan emphasizes greater advocacy and awareness through briefings and one-on-one meetings with policymakers and elected officials on Capitol Hill," West said. "We'll be working closer with other national groups to advance the issue of trauma-informed care by educating legislators at the federal level."

Witness Justice serves on the Victims' Rights Caucus Advisory Group, a select panel of organizations that advises the bipartisan Congressional Victim's Rights Caucus on key issues affecting crime victims and

survivors. It's also a member of the Mental Health Liaison Group.

West said this new strategy builds on initiatives like Team Heal Trauma, a charity running team, aimed at boosting awareness of the growing public health crisis caused by the psychological trauma of violent events, whether from crime, abuse, natural disaster, terrorism, or war.

"We're now shifting gears from advocating at just the grassroots level to a more collaborative effort for a stronger voice at the national level," she explained.

Other strategic goals include more training and educational outreach through contracts with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as using technology to address the skyrocketing demand for direct victim services.

"We want to create a free monthly online forum of leading national experts to respond to questions on the most critical topics of common interest to trauma survivors, their families, and caregivers," West said. "The planned program will give visitors an opportunity to add comments and blog regarding the topics, which recognizes other survivors as experts in healing and justice too."

Information from each month's event will be archived for future reference. The public forum will also provide suggested web sites, publications, and other resources as well.

In addition to these new and innovative approaches, Witness Justice will continue to offer services and support to the hundreds of individuals requesting assistance each month.

To achieve the new strategic goals, Witness Justice has made some changes and additions to its staff. Donna Bova, an independent business consultant, has been named vice president of Witness Justice. She has been a long-time supporter and a part-time program manager to the organization. Danielle Perella-Green left a career in the legal field to serve in the new full-time program assistant position. Melissa Bultema will be joining the organization as the program consultant for victims' services and Allison Cox will be serving as the administrative volunteer.

In addition, two communications professionals will serve as adjunct members of the Witness Justice staff. James Radack, a Washington D.C. consultant who served for 10 years as the senior vice president for public affairs at Mental Health America, specializes in promoting social issues at the national level. Mike Clem brings more than 25 years of experience in journalism, advertising, public relations and direct mail fundraising as a freelance writer and editorial consultant for Witness Justice's communications materials.

For more information on the exciting new programs, services and staff, visit the organization's web site at [www.WitnessJustice.org](http://www.WitnessJustice.org).

*Witness Justice is a national, grassroots, nonprofit organization created by survivors for survivors. Our mission is to empower and assist victims of violence and their loved ones with both healing from trauma and in navigating the criminal justice process. 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 [WitnessJustice.org](http://WitnessJustice.org).*

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