



Help and Healing for  
Victims of Violence

## Witness Justice e-Newsletter

September 2008

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**New Schedule!!  
Fall v-Trainings**

### What's Going on With Veterans and Their Families?

Approximately 1.6 million soldiers have served in Afghanistan and Iraq since October 2001. According to a recent study by the RAND Corporation, of this population, about 20%, or 300,000, showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression, *yet just over half of them sought treatment*. According to RAND researchers, of the 53% who sought treatment only half received "minimally adequate" treatment. In other words, of the 300,000 who displayed signs of PTSD or major depression, only a quarter received a modicum of help. While this number reflects those with PTSD, there are still many more returning veterans that have less severe, but still significant trauma wounds from combat that affect their lives, relationships, and future. And in the bigger picture of who is affected, there are also hundreds of thousands of family members and loved ones who may also need support while their loved

## V-Training

September 30, 2008

Back by demand... Helga West presents "The Effects of Trauma on Trafficking Victims and Challenges to Healing and Recovery"

October 17, 2008

Mildred Muhammad presents "Journaling: The Benefits," inspired by her own experiences as a victim of domestic violence.

November 18, 2008

David Washington presents "Identifying the Needs and Interventions for Substance Abusing Individuals with a History of Overwhelming Experiences"

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one is deployed and after reintegration.

While the recognition of PTSD has been a major step forward, war conditions that create responses like startle response, flashbacks, aggression, and high levels of adrenaline have all played an important role in the concerning increase of substance abuse and family violence that is not receiving the needed attention. The public and political views on aggressive responses have so far been viewed as domestic violence that requires anger management and other treatments. The violent responses, however, may have much more to do with the trauma experienced and condition created in war, and may not have otherwise occurred. In order to prevent these incidents of domestic violence and child abuse, veterans and their families need to be informed about the impact of prolonged combat trauma and the repeated exposure to violence and how this can change the personal and family dynamic after returning home.

WJ is addressing this gap by:

- Conducting a [national survey](#), supported by the Waitt Institute for Violence Prevention, on veterans of the current conflicts in Iraq/Afghanistan and family stress that is currently underway and will remain open until October 10, 2008.
- Hosting a [federal issue briefing](#) on Capitol Hill on this issue on October 24, 2008.
- Conducting outreach to veterans in and around the Washington, D. C. area, supported by a grant from The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, Starbucks Memorial Fund.

### California Guitar Trio Benefit Concert

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

### All in the Family: Family Court Law and Domestic Violence Survivors

Remember the big '70s hit show *All in the Family*? Remember the feuds between Edith and Archie? Their arguments never went past witty barbs and raised voices. They kept their angst "all in the family." In the world off screen, however, the Bunker's real-world counterparts sometimes cannot keep their fights "all in the family," and the family court system becomes involved. Yet that same court system needs transformation to help the DV survivor.

One area in dire need of systemic change, suggests reader Karen B., is family law and its approach to survivors of domestic violence. A resident of Maryland, she explains that in her state, domestic violence survivors "are forced to take mandatory parenting classes during any custody



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](#)

Be sure to come early for the silent auction benefiting Witness Justice!! Doors open at 6:30 pm.

Start Talking About  
**Trauma-Informed Care**  
Visit  
**Dare to Transform**  
on Ning.com!

*Revolutionizing Health  
and Human Services*

### Quick Links

[Witness Justice Home](#)  
[Team Heal Trauma](#)  
[National Center for  
Trauma-Informed Care](#)  
[Office on Violence  
Against Women](#)

[iGive.com Surfathon](#)

challenge"-part of the system's approach to DV survivors that she characterizes as "disturbing and dangerous."

No one would argue with a little education, except the classes, Karen B. explains, are "blanket classes" not specifically tailored to meet the needs of DV survivors, do not address specific issues related to DV, and worse, advocate for "co-parenting" and encourage "all parents to learn to work things out as far as the communication of the children"-sound advice, unless the student has lived under the power and control of an abusive husband. As Karen B. points out, this advice can be dangerous and potentially lethal to "someone who has survived their partner's abuse." Because the next time may be the last time.

The solution, Karen B. suggests, is for Family Court Services to create classes designed specifically for domestic violence survivors, classes that discuss issues unique to the plight of DV survivors, such as how to stay safe during "custody battles and visitations." Tailoring parenting classes would also be useful to individuals whose partner is abusing drugs and/or alcohol.

Her experience with the courts left Karen B. feeling isolated: "I found that during this process, I felt very isolated and had no faith in the education of the service providers." If the system brushes DV survivors into "blanket" parenting classes, it may ignore the particular needs of those requiring the greatest protection: the children. Karen B. adds, "I feel our system does not fully comprehend the impact on children or address the children's need or safety. It is more about parental rights."

Something is wrong in the Bunker's neighborhood. It's the family court system.

### Advocating for Change

But the neighborhood can have a safe haven for DV victims with a little education. Much of the mismatch between what is offered, or in this case mandated, and what is needed, occurs due to ignorance about domestic abuse and the resulting trauma, its characteristics, and what trauma survivors need to heal and move forward with their lives.

It's not enough to encourage parents to co-parent - especially in cases where domestic and/or substance abuse is involved. We need to be trauma-specific not only in offering support to survivors, but also in addressing these families in the family court system. The reality is that the situation, safety concerns, and traumatic impact require the family court to do more than the "blanket approach."

## Surf for Witness Justice!



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for details that could help you earn \$1,000 for Witness Justice by window shopping online. New members of iGive can earn an additional \$5.00 for WJ just by making a purchase within 45 days. Hurry - this offer expires on 12/31/08

*...And through September earn double donations as an iGive member when you make purchases at Amazon.com.*

SHOP TODAY FOR WJ!

## Verizon Velocity

Purchase qualifying Verizon products to help us meet our fund-raising goals!

We can earn up to \$65 with one purchase. Current or new Verizon customers can participate. Simply call the special Verizon Velocity number below and provide our special tracking code. It's that easy. Simply call:  
**1-888-695-5299**  
and give  
**Tracking Code:12250**

Your local legislators, with the proper tools, can make the changes needed. The CDC's report on [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACE\)](#), which documents the shocking prevalence of trauma among the youth and its causes, underlines the need to institute trauma-informed care for children. And the Witness Justice publication, [Trauma is the Common Denominator-Healing is the Common Goal](#), describes the causes, impact, and appropriate treatment for various forms of trauma.

Sharing these sources with decision-makers in your community may go a long way toward transformation in the family court system.

Editor's note: each month, the column "Changing Systems - Changing Lives," will explore a topic raised by readers, discuss issues relevant to that topic, and provide suggestions for effecting change in trauma-informed care systems. Witness Justice invites suggestions for future topics; please email suggestions to [editor@witnessjustice.org](mailto:editor@witnessjustice.org).

## Board Member Profile of the Month

*Jarad Platt*



At the age of 70, Jarad Platt is still working full-time as a Criminal Justice Treatment Specialist with the Maine Office of Substance Abuse (OSA) - a component of the Department of Health and Human Services. He is proud of the progress that his office has made in collaboration with the Maine Department of Corrections to provide substance abuse treatment to the criminal justice population - but he isn't stopping there. Through his position with OSA, he is also working with all six of

Maine's Adult Drug Treatment Courts to ensure that this important work is advanced and that appropriate treatment plans are in place for those who need them.

Jarad shares most of his spare time with his community. He is an active member of the GLBT Out to Dinner Group, a group that functions primarily as a social networking outlet. He is also one of the New England representatives of [Diema's Dream](#), a foundation that provides financial, medical, and educational support for Russian orphans that are physically and mentally disabled. The ultimate goal of the foundation is to create legislation that protects disabled children by offering their parents financial and medical support that would allow for the children to be cared for at home and raised by their parents rather than the current alternative; being placed in an institution. Jarad is involved in the planning and organization of the annual Christmas sale, hosted by the

New England Chapter, that raises money for the foundation.

A member of the Witness Justice Board of Directors since 2006, the organization looks to Jarad's expertise and experience in substance abuse recovery, as well as his compassion and commitment to those going through the healing process.

Jarad also enjoys oil painting, traveling, and watching specialty movies with his partner.

### PSAs Released to Raise Awareness About Human Trafficking

The Journey Film Group of Los Angeles, CA released five Public Service Announcements on human trafficking last month. The PSAs, part of the group's "[I Stop Traffic](#)" awareness campaign on human trafficking, featured voiceovers by actress Ashley Judd and aim to enlighten viewers on the prevalence of human trafficking, including domestic, labor and sex trafficking.

Director Michael Cory Davis' motivation for the PSAs stemmed from the high frequency of trafficking in the United States alone - citing over 50,000 trafficking victims each year.

To view the PSAs, please visit [www.Youtube.com/nohumantrafficking](http://www.Youtube.com/nohumantrafficking).

### Useful Resources

#### **After the Crisis Peer Support Training Curriculum**

Now Available! After the Crisis has developed peer support curriculum specific to disaster survivors.

[http://www.witnessjustice.org/about/after\\_the\\_crisis.cfm](http://www.witnessjustice.org/about/after_the_crisis.cfm)

#### **National Campus Safety Awareness Month**

The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously approved H. Res. 1288, designating the month of September as National Campus Safety Awareness Month. [http://sestak.house.gov/apps/list/press/pa07\\_sestak/080709\\_CampusSafety.shtml](http://sestak.house.gov/apps/list/press/pa07_sestak/080709_CampusSafety.shtml)

#### **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

Initiated by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and first observed in 1987, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

<http://www.ncadv.org/takeaction/>

[DomesticViolenceAwarenessMonth\\_134.html](http://www.ncadv.org/takeaction/DomesticViolenceAwarenessMonth_134.html)

## Where We've Been...

### August

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine - resource booklet

CNN Headline News - Thank you to Comcast Cable for interviewing WJ

### September

*No Longer in Sniper's Shadow* - WJ Board Member, Mildred Muhammad featured in The Washington Post, September 16, 2008

[Click Here](#)

## Calendar of Events

**September 25** - Save the date for the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims, organized by the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children. The memorial will take place at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

[http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/NDor\\_flier.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/NDor_flier.html)

**September 30** - v-Training session on "The Effects of Trauma on Trafficking Victims and Challenges to Healing and Recovery" is back by demand! It will be presented by Helga West, President & CEO of Witness Justice.

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/news/hwtraining.pdf>

**October 17** - v-Training session on "Journaling: The Benefits," presented by Mildred Muhammad.

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/news/hwtraining.pdf>

### **October 21**

- California Guitar Trio concert to benefit Witness Justice in Frederick, MD. Come early for an informational reception and silent auction to benefit Witness Justice. Doors open at 6:30 pm!

<http://www.allsaintsmd.org/cgt/index.php>

**October 24** - WJ will host a federal issue briefing on Capitol Hill on Combat Stress and the Family.

[http://www.witnessjustice.org/advocacysta/briefing\\_veterans.cfm](http://www.witnessjustice.org/advocacysta/briefing_veterans.cfm)

**October 26** - Team Heal Trauma runs the 33rd Annual Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C.

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/THT/index.cfm>

**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>

**November 18** - v-Training session on "Identifying the Needs and Interventions for Substance Abusing Individuals with a History of Overwhelming Experiences," presented by David Washington, LGSW, LCADC, AD/PC Sup

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/news/hwtraining.pdf>

*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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