



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS PARENT-TURNED-ADVOCATE WITH RONALD WILSON REAGAN PUBLIC POLICY AWARD

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today presented Missey Smith the Ronald Wilson Reagan Public Policy Award during the annual National Crime Victims’ Service Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. This honor is awarded to individuals whose leadership, vision and innovation have led to significant changes in public policy and practice that benefit crime victims.

“Ms. Smith endured the unimaginable for any parent — the murder of her 18-year-old daughter — and has turned her own tragedy into a remarkable legislative achievement that has the potential to save lives,” said Attorney General William P. Barr. “Her selfless advocacy and her exceptional skills as a negotiator have helped legislators strike a balance between privacy and public safety and have led to laws in 23 states that enable law enforcement officers to use cell phone signals to find and rescue victims.”

Missey Smith’s daughter, Kelsey Ann, disappeared on June 2, 2007. While people were searching for her, law enforcement officials and the district attorney begged Kelsey’s cell phone provider to release the location of her phone, but the company refused, citing privacy regulations. It took four days for the provider to release the location to law enforcement. Forty-five minutes after the location was released, her body was found. Devastated, yet determined not to let Kelsey’s death be in vain, Smith and her husband created the Kelsey Smith Foundation and advocated for the U.S. Congress and state lawmakers to pass The Kelsey Smith Act. The law allows cell phone companies to reveal the location of a cell phone if authorities determine the subscriber is in danger. The law has passed in 23 states, and it has been used to recover the body of a murder victim, find a baby in a carjacked vehicle, prevent a suicide and save a person from a potential overdose.

“Ms. Smith experienced a terrible tragedy and has worked diligently, and selflessly, to spare others the same nightmare,” said Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth. “Her courage, resilience and strength of spirit are an inspiration.”

The Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a component of OJP, leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and hosts an annual award ceremony. President Reagan proclaimed the first Victims’ Rights Week in 1981, calling for

greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of victims. This year's observance takes place April 7-13, with the theme "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future."

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth, provides federal leadership, grants and resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal justice system. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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