



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS ARKANSAS TEACHER WITH VOLUNTEER AWARD FOR HELPING CRIME VICTIMS

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today presented Arkansas teacher Laura Abbott the Volunteer for Victims Award during the annual National Crime Victims’ Service Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. This honor is awarded to individuals for their extraordinary and selfless efforts resulting in positive and lasting changes in the lives of crime victims.

“Ms. Abbott suffered a near deadly domestic assault and somehow not only survived but became an outstanding advocate for other victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes,” said Attorney General William P. Barr. “We honor her today for her extensive work in the seven years since her attack to bring awareness to victims’ rights and to educate the public on the impact of crime and trauma.”

In 2012, Abbott was attacked by her husband, who struck her with his vehicle and left her for dead in a remote mountaintop parking lot. She survived and went on to become a volunteer advocate for other domestic violence victims. She helped to draft legislation that includes provisions for victimless prosecution, a statewide lethality assessment and mandated education in public schools on teen dating violence and healthy relationships. Abbott also led efforts to create “Laura’s Card,” an information card for victims of violent crime that outlines their rights and provides helpful resources. Through her grassroots movement, “Victims’ Rights Arkansas,” she speaks to groups across the state about victims’ rights and is working to promote passage of a state victims’ rights constitutional amendment.

“Our nation’s criminal justice system must be responsive and compassionate to victims of crime,” said Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth. “Ms. Abbott has encouraged these actions at the legislative and grassroots levels, where she has worked tirelessly to ensure that victims know about their rights and the resources available to help them recover.”

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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