



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS FORT WAYNE PROGRAM WITH CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS AWARD

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a division of the Office of Justice Programs, presented the Crime Victims’ Rights Award to the Fort Wayne (Indiana) Police Department Victim Assistance Program. This National Crime Victims’ Service Awards category honors those whose efforts to advance or enforce crime victims’ rights have benefited victims of crime at the state, tribal or national level.

“When the very notion of victims’ rights was still in its infancy, the Fort Wayne Police Department’s Victim Assistance Program was doing something that few organizations, much less law enforcement agencies, were doing – providing counsel and support to victims,” said OJP Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan. “For almost four decades, this pioneer in police-based victim services has offered wrap-around assistance and community service referrals, sending a powerful message that Fort Wayne’s finest are there for crime victims.”

Established in 1981, the Victims Assistance Program gives comprehensive services crime victims in the city of Fort Wayne and surrounding Allen County. Under the leadership of Director Jessica Crozier, staff and volunteers provide information, crisis intervention, case management and advocacy as crime victims navigate the criminal justice system. In 2018, the Victim Assistance Program helped 7,300 primary victims of crime.

On call 24/7, the program collaborates with community and state agencies to present events that address the spectrum of crime victims’ needs. To raise awareness, the program hosts outreach efforts such as Rise up Against Domestic Violence during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month; a candlelight vigil to remember homicide victims; and Santa’s Workshop, which gives Christmas toys to victims’ family members. The program also joins with local churches to provide meals to families of homicide victims.

“All victims of crime deserve trained, devoted advocates to guide them through a difficult, often complex and always heart-wrenching journey,” said OVC Director Jessica E. Hart. “The Fort Wayne Police Department’s Victim Assistance Program has given us a shining example of a law enforcement agency committed to building bonds of trust with those who carry the pain of crime and violence.”

The Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a component of OJP, leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. 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 took place April 19-25 and featured the theme, “Seek

Justice | Ensure Victims' Rights | Inspire Hope.” The award recipients were honored privately and virtually with friends, family and Office of Justice Programs leadership.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan, provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation’s capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years.

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