



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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CONTACT: LAUREN LAMBERT, 202-305-7776
LAUREN.LAMBERT@OJP.USDOJ.GOV

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS FEDERAL VICTIM ADVOCATE WITH FEDERAL SERVICE AWARD

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department’s Office for Victims of Crime, a division of the Office of Justice Programs, presented the Federal Service Award to Darlene Averick, Supervisory Program Manager of the Victim Witness Assistance Program for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This National Crime Victims’ Service Awards category recognizes the extraordinary efforts of federal agency personnel who lead initiatives or reforms and make extraordinary contributions that impact victims of federal, tribal, and military crimes, or more broadly promotes victims’ rights and services for victims nationally and internationally.

“It is accurate to say that Ms. Averick’s contributions have influenced tens of thousands of crime victims whom ATF personnel have encountered in the last 13 years,” said OJP Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan. “And her impact extends to other federal agencies, which regard her training program as a model. She exemplifies the Administration’s commitment to ensuring that all victims of crime can receive the services they so desperately need.”

Since joining VWAP in 2006 as the first full-time staff member, Ms. Averick overcame resource challenges and achieved program acceptance. She secured Justice Department funding, rewrote ATF policy on victim assistance and hired program personnel. She initially developed and implemented online ATF training on victim witness assistance for analysts and special agents who provided victim assistance in addition to their primary responsibilities. This training became a model for other federal agencies.

Ms. Averick incorporated training mandates for agents and field employees who contact victims, leading VWAP to its success. She was instrumental in creating an array of courses, including standards for interviewing victims of sexual assault and harassment, response protocol for mass casualty disasters and procedures for ATF and local law enforcement to notify victims in ballistics-related cold cases. By 2018, Ms. Averick ensured that in-person victim training reached 2,200 special agents and more than 700 additional staff. In that year, ATF specialists served 6,467 crime victims.

“Ms. Averick offers proof that appropriate victim services, offered at the point of need by trained and qualified providers, can transform lives,” said OVC Director Jessica E. Hart. “Ms. Averick shows that effective training can be invaluable for those responsible for guiding victims through a difficult, often complex and heart-wrenching journey.”

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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