



# Montgomery County Family Justice Center

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## SPECIAL POINT OF INTEREST:

Firearms  
Investigative  
Task Force

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## From the Desk of State's Attorney John McCarthy

As State's Attorney for Montgomery County I review a lot of numbers. However, there is no number that I am more proud of than the number zero. The number zero is the number of domestic related homicides experienced in this county the entire calendar year of 2010. I knew that if we aggressively addressed the issue of domestic violence we would substantially reduce the number of homicide victims in our county. As a long time prosecutor, I became painfully aware of the fact that all too often if you are a woman living in this county and you were the victim of a homicide, it occurred during the course of a domestic violence incident.

However, our job is not done and the task we have challenged ourselves with remains. The Family Justice Center (FJC) is now finishing up its third year of operation. Each day, each month, each year, through the investment of both public and private partners, we strive to develop additional innovative ways to protect children and victims of domestic violence. I am

particularly grateful to the Verizon Corporation for a \$40,000 grant that will allow us to install forensic interviewing equipment at the FJC.

An additional innovative program created by the State's Attorney's Office and



The Montgomery County Family Justice Center is centrally located in the heart of Rockville, Maryland.

Sheriff's Office under the leadership of Karla Smith, is our Healthy Teen Dating Program. This program has already provided us with the opportunity to speak to over 2,000 young people in our community about the do's and don'ts of healthy dating relationships, particularly emphasizing the dangers of physical and verbal abuse in young dating. We hope that programs like this, where we teach young adult's proper respect for themselves and each other in their personal relationships will, in the long

run, reduce domestic violence in our community.

On a final note, I was present again at this year's Annual FJC benefit. It was inspiring to see our public, private and financial supporters during an evening dedicated towards celebrating the success of our community's investment in the FJC. As State's Attorney for Montgomery County, the FJC may be our county's finest example of how public and private partnerships can together help us build a safer and more caring community.

As State's Attorney for Montgomery County, please accept my personal thanks for your continued support of the vital work done each day at the FJC. But, as the events of March 13<sup>th</sup> remind us, with the tragic murder of a domestic violence victim in Kensington, our work continues and our dream of providing personal safety to every domestic violence victim has not yet been achieved.

John McCarthy

Montgomery County  
State's Attorney



Deputy III Steve Austin, Fire-arms Task Force Investigator

# Firearms Investigation Task Force

During the DC area sniper investigation, the Montgomery County Police received over 20,000 tips from concerned citizens about individuals who were in possession of guns illegally and were suspected of involvement in the shootings. These reports convinced law enforcement that there was a need to investigate firearms violations full time; thus, the Firearms Investigation Unit was created. Since the Units inception in 2003, in partnership with the Montgomery County Police,

Deputies and MCPD Officers have been investigating illegal firearms possession and facilitating gun turn-ins for Domestic Violence cases where respondents are ordered to surrender firearms on Temporary and Final Protection Orders.

Since the opening of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center, the Firearms Investigation Unit has truly benefited from the cooperation among multiple domestic violence agencies. In the Spring of 2011, a petitioner from a Final

Protection Order contacted one of the Sheriff's Office's victim assistants and stated she discovered that the respondent in the protection order had boldly posted multiple pictures of himself holding guns on his Facebook page. Needless to say, this concerned the petitioner due to the lengthy history of abuse. Independently, the Firearms Investigation Unit received a call from Parole & Probation stating they had discovered Facebook photos of the same respondent, who **(Continued to page 6)**



# Respect: Give it! Get it! Get Involved!

Teens, parents and youth service providers mark your calendars for Saturday, March 24, 2012 and plan to attend the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Conference!** The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, numerous community partners and Verizon Wireless are sponsoring this special event in an effort to raise awareness about teen dating abuse and ultimately

to prevent it.

The Center for Disease Control recognizes teen dating abuse as a serious public health problem. According to their data, homicide was the second leading cause of death, behind unintentional injury, in young women age 15-24. Yet most teens say it will never happen to them. Furthermore, eighty-one percent of parents surveyed believe teen

dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue. Awareness of teen dating abuse is important; recognizing the early warning signs is critical and learning how to intervene when you see it, could save a life.

This half day conference will take place at the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College in the **(Continued to page 6)**



The display of holiday gifts and toys donated by the Bar Association of Montgomery County.

# Bar Association Delivers Holiday Gifts

The Bar Association of Montgomery County once again came through this holiday season to make the season brighter by donating over 250 unwrapped gifts along with almost one thousand dollars in gift card and monetary donations for FJC clients and their children. The Community Outreach Committee of the Bar Association coordinated the Toy and

Gift drive and delivery just in time to make sure every child walking out the doors of FJC not only carries a gift, but a joyous smile during the holiday season. Donations included beautifully designed gift bags containing toiletries and cosmetics, Barbie dolls, stuffed animals, toy cars and play sets, sports equipment, and of course Lego and puzzle sets for the older children. The gift cards, mostly from grocery stores, are used by clients to

purchase necessities among other goods in this difficult time of their lives.

The holidays can be extremely challenging for the families we assist at the FJC. Going through family violence can make it difficult for the children and their families to celebrate. However our staff at FJC with the generous help and donations of community organizations such as the **(Continued to page 6)**

# One-Stop Shop

The mission of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center is to promote safety, well-being, and healing for victims of family violence. The phenomenon that drives the Family Justice Center movement is the idea of a “one-stop shop” where victims of domestic violence and their families can receive services within one location, rather than having to go from place to place experiencing barriers in the process. What does a “one-stop shop” truly mean, though? And what are the benefits to service providers of this collaborative approach?

There have been several cases in which this concept has allowed victims, their children, and the system to work more efficiently, maximizing victim safety and offender accountability. Here are but three examples:

One client came into the FJC seeking protection from her husband who had become deeply involved in religion and was pressing his newfound beliefs on his wife and children. His behavior became physically abusive to the client and her children. Additionally, the client reported national security concerns. By responding to the FJC, she and her children were able to receive a plethora of services and contact was made with many different agencies. The client was assisted with filing for Protective Orders for herself and her children. She was able to

receive assistance from the Sheriff’s Office, the Abused Persons Program, and House of Ruth Legal and Counseling Programs. Immediate notifications were made to interested national security agencies as well. The client also enrolled her children in the Safe Start program. She received ongoing services.

On another day a client came to the FJC with her children accompanied by her own father. She was referred here by a case worker because she and her children were being abused. Upon meeting with an Intake Specialist, alarming information was revealed regarding severe abuse of her and the children that she had not disclosed to anyone before. The State’s Attorney’s Office stepped in quickly and contacted a specialized unit of the Police Department who sent a Detective to the FJC for immediate action. The client was also provided with a phone that she could use through Verizon’s Hopeline project before leaving with the Detective. The coordination with the Police resulted in the husband being arrested that same night. The following day the client came back to the FJC to obtain a Temporary Protective Order against her husband. The client was also connected with the House of Ruth for legal assistance and with the APP for counseling.

Another client that benefited from the multidisciplinary presence at the FJC was a client who came in with her attorney following a Protective Order hearing. She reported for the first time there had been a serious assault previously. Immediate action was taken and the client revealed details to an on-site Detective who in turn called in a specialized unit of the Police Department to the FJC. The abuser was quickly apprehended. The client was given a phone for her safety because the abuser had broken hers. She was also assisted by the Sheriff’s Office Victim Assistant who worked with her and a counselor with the Abused Persons Program. At a later date she was able to receive assistance from Catholic Charities at the FJC.

In conclusion, a “one-stop shop” is a place where victims of domestic violence can go to be wrapped in a net of services, safety, and comfort that provides them with a sense that they are being cared for on many fronts. This also allows for the investigative work of police and prosecutors to take place in the moments after a domestic violence crime has been committed, when their immediate involvement is so critical in holding abusers accountable and keeping victims safe.



**Case Coordinators Diana Roche and Bethany Holliday collaborate on a FJC case.**

**FJC Update: Since the Grand Opening 3400 domestic violence clients representing 100 different countries of origin have received services at the FJC.**

## Warmth and Comfort Abound at the FJC

Thoughts of community and caring clearly inspired Rachel Wims, when she, as a young 6th grader initiated a blanket drive to benefit those in need. The drive turned out to be a success! Now as Youth Ambassador President of the Victims’ Rights Foundation (VRF), she and her fellow Ambassadors conduct the drive annually. Currently in its 5th

year, the youth collected over 500 blankets between November 1, 2011 and January 24, 2012.

The Family Justice Center was very fortunate to be presented with a number of those blankets for distribution to clients and their children who come to the FJC for services. The FJC staff is extremely appreciative of Rachel and all the ambassa-

dors for their ongoing commitment to this initiative. The blankets will be another opportunity for us to extend warmth and comfort to FJC clients.



**Pictured L to R: Sheriff Darren M. Popkin, Youth Ambassadors with Rachel Wims, Delegate Aruna Miller MD District 14 and VRF Founder, Greg Wims.**



# Family Justice Center Foundation News

## FJC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS

- Resa Levy  
Executive Director
- Thomas M. DeGonia II  
President
- Dorothy Fait  
Treasurer
- Marilyn Bagel
- David Belkin
- Judith Clark
- David P. Cohen
- Catherine Leggett
- Maria Ryan
- Lewis Selis

## FJC FOUNDATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

- The Honorable Sharon Grosfeld
- The Honorable Constance A. Morella
- Rabbi David Rose
- The Honorable Ida G. Ruben
- The Honorable Duchy Trachtenberg

## From the Desk of the Executive Director Resa Levy



**Resa Levy**  
MCFJC Foundation  
Executive Director

I find it almost impossible to believe that in just a couple of months, on May 18, 2012, we will mark the Third Anniversary of the MCFJC. From the day the doors first opened, until today, the growth of the MCFJC and the growth of our MCFJC Foundation, has been nothing short of amazing.

Our Foundation is successful because of you – our donors and supporters. So, a great big thank you is well in order. Thank you for your time, your effort, your support, your critical thinking, and your true spirit of community partnership in helping to end the scourge of domestic violence and relationship abuse.

Thank you for being involved - and also for *staying* involved. Your on-going support has made it possible for

our Board Member and Event Chair, Catherine Leggett, and her Planning Committee to already be well underway in planning for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Benefit, to be held at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, on Sunday evening, October 14, 2012.

My special appreciation is extended to our retiring Vice President and Secretary, Donna Rismiller for her tireless effort and support she gave to the MCFJC Foundation. On behalf of the entire MCFJC Foundation Board, I cannot thank her enough for her contributions of time, talent and expertise.

Check out our website [www.mcfjcfoundation.org](http://www.mcfjcfoundation.org) to read more or email the foundation at [mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com) if you'd like to speak with someone from the foundation.

Thank you again for your support!

Resa Levy

## Verizon Wireless Supports 3rd Annual Teen Dating Conference

At a special event for senior Verizon Wireless leadership, The MCFJC foundation received a check in the amount of \$8800 for its support of Montgomery County's Teen Conference: Choose Respect. The Conference is a day-long interactive program with breakout sessions in both Spanish and English, as well as programmatic features that include informative, educational and entertaining portions that will engage and enlighten parents, teens and youth service providers. The goal of the event is to take a serious look at how best to be aware of and also curtail and end teen dating and relationship abuse. We appreciate Verizon's wonder-

ful support. It will assist us with outreach to both parents and teens to help promote the framework for establishing healthy dating relationships.

For more information about Choose Respect Montgomery's Third Annual Teen Dating Conference go to: <http://bit.ly/o8j0l>



Pictured from L to R: Hannah Sassoon, MCFJC Director; Nancy Clark, North East Area President; Resa Levy, MCFJC Foundation Executive Director; Montgomery County, Maryland Sheriff Darren Popkin; Howard Waterman, North East Area Executive Director Corporate Communications; and Mike Maiorana, Washington Baltimore Virginia Region President

# From the Desk of MCFJC Foundation President, Tom DeGonia



**Thomas DeGonia**  
MCFJC  
Foundation

"It's Everybody's Business" is this year's MCFJC Foundation's theme for its outreach effort to the business community. Businesses such as Verizon, Geico, Kaiser, Adventist Health, Liz Claiborne and many others, know and understand the tremendous impact that domestic

violence and relationship abuse has on the business community. Millions of employee hours are lost each year due to absenteeism and loss of productivity because of domestic violence.

As President of the Foundation, I am out-

reaching to Board Members Lewis Selis, Maria Ryan and David Belkin for their leadership on our "It's Everybody's Business" campaign. As David Belkin notes, "Businesses are a part of our community and we believe that the MCFJC can increase the overall health of the community by reaching out to businesses to inform them about our work."

There are many ways in which a business may participate in this endeavor, through cash contributions as well as in-kind donations. While financial support is the mainstay of our being able to provide electronic equipment otherwise not provided, or offer the ability to provide for additional counseling for children, or help with emergency life-saving services, there are other ways to participate.

For instance, bookstores might consider donating books to our children's library or a toy store may donate children's games or toys. A salon in the community could offer a make-over. Currently, Panera Bread provides weekly donations and local merchants have provided items for both our live and silent benefit auctions.

If you're interested in helping with this effort or if you have any ideas or even a business you think would like to be a part of our "It's Everybody's Business" campaign, please email us at [mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.org](mailto:mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.org). We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,  
Tom DeGonia,  
MCFJC Foundation President

## WOW!

### MCFJC FOUNDATION'S 3rd ANNUAL BENEFIT!

#### OCTOBER 14, 2012 And you are cordially invited

Great news! The Planning Committee of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual MCFJC Foundation Benefit for the MCFJC, under the leadership of Chair Catherine Leggett, has selected October 14, 2012 at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda as the date and venue for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Event.

The event will be held in the ballroom and will feature some new and exciting program additions. So please mark your calendars and start to tell your friends and colleagues.

In addition to the change of venue this year, we will be adding a special pre-event meet and greet and photo op on the concourse level. This will be a great time for our honorees, sponsors, Board and Advisory Board members, and other special guests to get together – we hope you'll become a sponsor and join us!

And you won't want to miss out on our extraordinary silent and live auctions where fabulous jewelry, trips and gifts await your bid.

So please plan on joining our Chair, Catherine Leggett, and her Benefit Planning Committee of Lori Askinazi, Marilyn Bagel, Leslie Berger, Judy Clark, Wilma Holmes, Resa Levy, Lisa Mandel-Trupp, Donna McKinney, Cynthia Mogel, Suzanne Popkin, Jo Ann Ricchiuti, Hannah Sassoon and Karla Smith on October 14, 2012 for a fabulous 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Benefit for the MCFJC.

Your support truly makes a difference in someone's life!

## MCFJC Foundation Giving Tree

Our sponsors and supporters are the roots of the MCFJC Foundation that have allowed us to support the life changing and life saving work of the MCFJC. It is through their generosity that we have been able to provide furnishings, works of original art, help fund existing programs and projects, provide cutting edge electronic equipment and support new ideas as they develop.

With that in mind, and with a special gift from a wonderful donor, Alicia Doherty, the MCFJC Foundation commis-

sioned Arts on the Block, an outstanding not-for-profit youth organization teaching real world career and life skills to youth through art, to create a special piece of art to honor our donors and supporters.

The outcome of this joint community effort is a fabulous MCFJC Foundation mosaic "Giving Tree," pictured here at the entranceway of the MCFJC. Names of donors will be inscribed on brass plaques and affixed to the various branches and leaves of the piece. Gifts of \$1,000 and above will be recognized.



Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Section Captain Rodney Brown and Lt. Robert Bonanno stand with Jo Ann Ricchiuti before The Giving Tree

## Special Thanks to the Following New and Continuing MCFJC Foundation Sponsors

*Thank you to our wonderful supporters!*

*It is through your gifts that we are able to provide the social, legal, psychological and protective services necessary to rebuild the lives of the women, children and families who have survived domestic and relationship abuse.*

Meg Baker  
Bar Association of Montgomery County  
Cynthia Farringer & "The Busy Bs"  
Eta Pi Zeta Chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority  
Korean Women's Chamber

Panera Bread  
The William Cross Foundation  
Town of Chevy Chase Residents  
Verizon Wireless  
Victims' Rights Foundation  
Westat, Inc. - Human Services Group

## 101 Puppies, Bears and More!



MCFJC Foundation Executive Director, Resa Levy and members of the Eta Pi Zeta Chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority

For the second year in a row, the Social Action Committee of the Eta Pi Zeta Chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, centered their end-of-year project around the MCFJC and presented 101 stuffed bears, puppies and bunnies to the Center for distribution to the children who come to the FJC.

In order raise funds to purchase these warm and "huggable" giveaways, members of the Chapter created and distributed a beautiful flyer with information that the Cold Stone Creamery in Silver Spring would donate a percentage of sales to the sorority for this very special project.

**Task Force Cont:** was on probation from a previous drug conviction, holding and showing off guns. Based on the information received from the victim assistant and Parole & Probation, the Firearms Investigation Unit immediately obtained subpoenas from the State's Attorney's Office at the Family Justice Center. Through investigation, search warrants were executed at the respondent's home where multiple firearms and drugs were recovered. Thanks to the cooperative enforcement efforts of the Montgomery County Police and the Sheriff's Office, this potentially dangerous situation ended with an arrest. The defendant in this case received 12 months in jail. This example is just one of the many ways the Family Justice Center and the Firearms Investigation Unit are working together to remove firearms from potentially deadly domestic violence situations.

In an average year, the Sheriff's Office seizes over 200 guns from Domestic Violence orders, calls, and arrests. For every gun seized, follow-up investigation is conducted as well. The Firearms Investigation Unit traces the gun to make sure it is from the proper owner, charges people who are

illegally in possession of guns, and compares bullet ballistics to determine if the firearm has been used in any crimes nationally.

Data from the U.S. Department of Justice, show that a victim of domestic violence is 7 times more likely to be the victim of a homicide if the abuser has access to firearm. Due to this potential danger, the Firearms Investigation Unit will continue to focus on work to keep petitioners and victims safe by removing firearms from domestic abusers.

**Bar Association Cont:** Bar Association make these difficult times a little easier. The ongoing support and charitable donations of the community really reminds us that so many people still make it a priority to take care of those going through major transitions in their lives. The continuing generosity of our donors is highly appreciated by FJC staff, and the infinite smiles of our clients during the holiday season prove that no matter how big or small the gifts, each one has made a difference in our clients' lives.

**Choose Respect Cont:** Cultural Arts Center from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm. There will be workshops for teens in grades 6-12, and for parents and youth service providers on topics related to teen dating violence. Workshops this year will also include a special focus on how to get actively involved to stop teen dating violence and not be just a bystander.

**Toby Knapp**, DJ from Hot 99.5 will join us as a special guest to kick-off the event. The opening act will feature the Holloway Youth Project, formerly known as City at Peace DC. At the conclusion of the conference winners of the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Choose Respect Public Service Announcement Contest** will be recognized. For more information about the contest and the conference go to: <http://bit.ly/o8j0l>  
To register for the conference online go to [www.chooserespectmontgomery.eventbrite.com](http://www.chooserespectmontgomery.eventbrite.com) or in Spanish register at [www.eligeelrespetomontgomery.eventbrite.com](http://www.eligeelrespetomontgomery.eventbrite.com) or call 240 777-9366. For access to all conference updates and Choose Respect Montgomery events, like us on Facebook at Choose Respect Montgomery.

