



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Victims' Rights Advocate Roberta Roper to Speak At DPSCS'
10th Annual National Crime Victims' Rights Week Kickoff Event
Monday, April 27 at 9:30 a.m. in Sykesville**

TOWSON, MD (April 23, 2009)---Roberta Roper, whose daughter's murder nearly 30 years ago launched what became of the nation's most important victims' rights crusades, will be the keynote speaker at the 10th annual Victims' Rights Week Open House and Awards Ceremony hosted by the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). The event is Monday, April 27 at 9:30 at the Public Safety Education and Training Center, 6852 4th St. in Sykesville (on the grounds of Springfield State Hospital).

When Ms. Roper's daughter Stephanie was killed, victims' rights were hardly front and center in Maryland or anywhere else. Her campaign eventually led to the formation of a foundation (now the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center) and to the passage of an amendment to the Maryland Constitution guaranteeing certain protections and services for victims.

Monday's event will also feature remarks by DPSCS Secretary Gary Maynard; a personal testimony from DPSCS employee and longtime law enforcement officer Rick Harding, whose son was killed; a presentation by the Maryland Division of Correction (DOC) K-9 Unit commander about the state's first-in-the-nation cell phone detector dog program; and awards to victim service advocates.

At every level of the system, DPSCS takes victims' rights very seriously. Within most DPSCS divisions and agencies, there are employees whose main job is victims' services; the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board disburses millions every year to victims of violent crime; and each year, DPSCS agencies play a large role in statewide victims' rights events.

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Monday's kickoff event is just the beginning of departmental observances and activities for National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Among the highlights:

-  DOC will hold its annual prison tour for victims at the now-closed House of Correction in Jessup (Friday, May 1).
-  Two Hagerstown prisons will have special inmate-and-victim events designed to foster dialogue and healing (April 29);
-  Inmates at Eastern Correctional Institution on the Eastern Shore will hold a walk-a-thon to benefit a victims' group (April 29);
-  Parole and Probation agents on the Eastern Shore will hold a victims' remembrance tree planting in Salisbury (April 28);
-  The Division of Pretrial Detention and Services will host a Victims' Rights Ceremony at Baltimore Central Booking and Intake (April 30).

Various other facilities will also be hosting in-house events to allow employees to contribute to victims' service providers and advocacy groups.

Members of the media are welcome to attend most events. Please contact the number above in advance.

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