



# The VSC Voice

## Newsletter

Working together for a violence-free society

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### Introducing...

## Victim Services Center's New Home in Norristown: 325 Swede Street, 2nd Floor



Victim Services Center started off the fiscal year just right, moving from 18 West Airy Street in Norristown, a building the agency had occupied for over a decade, to 325 Swede Street in Norristown.

The move was a strategic decision by Board and staff to reduce rent cost while remaining close to the courthouse. VSC's new office has created a welcoming environment tailored to client and staff needs, complete with open, airy session rooms, large office space for staff, and a homey environment.

"We want our clients to feel like they are coming to someone's home, where they can get support," Mary Onama, VSC's Executive Director stated.

Along with the new home, VSC has also acquired a new telephone system, security system and updated computers.



Mary Onama, Executive Director

Join us for our Open House on December 8th,  
2011 from 4:30pm to 7:30 pm.

## Save the Date...

PLEASE JOIN US

In honoring the 2012 VSC Leadership Award Recipient



## Bikers Against Child Abuse Montgomery County Chapter

At the 2012 Matty Muir/Leadership Awards, Volunteer Recognition  
Brunch & Silent Auction

Sunday, March 18th, 2012

Normandy Farm Hotel & Conference Center ◆ Blue Bell, PA

Tickets can be purchased online at [www.victimservicescenter.org](http://www.victimservicescenter.org) or call (610) 277-0932 for info.

# New Program: Victim Input into Sex Offender Management



Advocacy Department: (from Left) Stevee Woodward, Sylvia Kershaw-Ramirez, Erin Slight, Emily Amicone

A new program has emerged out of the continued partnership between VSC and Montgomery County Adult Probation and Parole Department called the Victim Input into Sex Offender Management. This is a voluntary opportunity for victims to gain a great understanding of sex offender management, ask questions to the probation department, and take an active part in the management process of their specific offender by meeting with an advocate and probation officer at the Victim Services Center office. Montgomery County Adult Probation Department's Sex Offender Unit explains their role to victims, which entails being generally subject to the following:

- Supervising offenders through a case plan/in-person contact
- Identifying risks and needs of offenders
- Therapeutic Polygraph Examinations
- Random Searches
- Computer Monitoring
- Specific treatment for offenders

This victim centered approach to sex offender management Sex Offender Specific Rules and Regulations has the potential to empower victims of sexual assault, strengthen the feeling of safety for victims, and allows victims the opportunity to assist the probation department in keeping our communities safe.

*If you are interested in learning more about this program you can contact Victim Services Center at 1-888-521-0983.*

## The Use of Play in Child Counseling

*Shoshana Wortman, Psy.D., Counseling Services Supervisor*

Victim Services Center (VSC) has a Child Abuse Treatment Program, providing counseling to children ages 5-17 and their non-offending parents. This program consists of up to a year of free counseling for children who are victims of or witnesses to a crime. Our job is to help children process their interpretations of and their feelings about their trauma. This requires counselors to use a variety of approaches depending on the child's age, including talking, using structured exercises, and playing.

Several studies have shown that children naturally develop imaginative play, and they can use this inclination to help act out their thoughts, feelings, relationships and experiences. The counselor's role is to help children to use the play to address and resolve their own struggles. The Association for Play Therapy states that utilizing play in counseling has been shown to be effective with a variety of issues, including grief and loss, crisis and trauma, and a variety of mental health problems. Nancy Boyd Webb (2010) spoke about how play can help the victimized child to re-gain a sense of safety and control by being able to dictate the events and feelings within their play.

It is also important that parents be involved in their children's counseling, either through participating in the play sessions or to communicate with the counselor regularly. Bratton, Ray, Rhine, and Jones (2005) looked at many studies which used play in counseling with children. They found that parent participation increases the effectiveness of the treatment.



Counseling Department: (from left) Meghan Lenz, Rebbecca Zenkert, Kristen Green, Shoshana Wortman

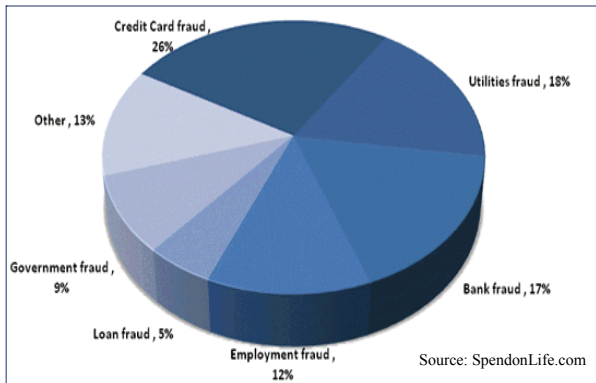
In my years at VSC, I have seen play be an effective healing tool for children. One child who was a victim of sexual abuse used dolls to re-enact inappropriate actions between a male and female. Through play, she was able to resolve the situation for herself by throwing the offending doll in jail and having other characters in her play rescue and support the victim. The counselor also can use this opportunity to reinforce how to keep touches safe and healthy.

Toys and materials used for counseling are selected in order to help children reflect the real-life situation and act out their feelings in a creative way. VSC has a wonderful play counseling room in which children can feel comfortable to express themselves as they heal. Because our toys have been used by so many children, some are old or broken and need to be replaced. Please see our wish list to see how you can donate a tax deductible gift to help a child's healing journey.

### VSC's Counseling Wish-List

Our new home is in need of some toys for our child clients! All donations can be dropped off at the office between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday.

- Fire/Police/Doctor themed toys
- Multi-cultural dolls/Barbie's
- Small sizes people dolls
- Dress up clothing for boys & girls (ages 5+)
- People and animal puppets
- Art supplies (clay, play doh, crafts, etc.)
- GIFT CARDS (Target, Toys R Us, Michaels, etc.)



## IDENTITY THEFT: Not Just for Seniors

A recent study by credit bureaus shows that most Americans believe senior citizens are at highest risk for Identity Theft and Financial Fraud.



Education Department: (from left) Samantha Bragg, Tara Hafele, Theresa Cox

Studies also show that the highest risk age group is 30-36 year olds. Approximately 15 million Americans have had their identity used fraudulently, with the average monetary loss per case being \$3,500. So, **what can you do?**

- ◆ **Keep your Mail in Sight:** don't put outgoing mail in unprotected "out boxes" or curbside mailboxes. Don't write account numbers on envelopes and do not leave your mail in the mailbox when on vacation.
- ◆ **Know who's Watching:** make sure no one is standing behind you at ATM's, pay bills online using a secure site, don't give out credit card information online or over the phone unless it is a secure site.

### Partners in Prevention

Partner with us in our fight against sexual violence and other crimes. Make a donation to VSC to help bring together violence free communities.

Donations can be made by check to:  
Victim Services Center of Montgomery County, Inc.  
325 Swede Street, 2nd Floor  
Norristown, PA 19401

All donations are tax deductible.

- ◆ **Know Yourself:** get a credit check done at least once a year, shred all financial statements, billing statements and preapproved credit card offers, use traveler's checks instead of personal bank checks, examine all credit card statements each month for inconsistencies.

- ◆ **Be Secure:** commit all passwords to memory, keep personal info. Secure and confidential, don't carry your social security card, auto insurance policies or car registration in your vehicle or on your person.

For more info on how to protect yourself, or what to do if you become a victim of ID Theft, visit [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org) or [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov).



Lauren Peterson,  
Volunteer Coordinator

## Volunteer Services

Victim Services Center relies on the gift of time and effort from our volunteers. Without their support and help, our staff would have it much harder. Volunteers assist victims of crime and their families by providing 24 hour crisis counseling, information about VSC services and referrals to other appropriate agencies.

Volunteers also provide accompaniments to hospital and police stations for victims and crime, and man our 24-hr crisis hotlines. Volunteers attend quarterly dinner meetings to discuss procedures and refresh their skills, as well as get updates on VSC policies and new information as it is available. VSC volunteers include working and retired adults, as well as graduate and undergraduate students from local colleges.

The 2010-2011 Fiscal Year brought with it a milestone reached by VSC Volunteers: Volunteers have covered our 24-hour crisis hotline every day for at least one shift. Not a day has gone by from September 2010 to September 2011 that did not have volunteer hotline coverage. Our volunteers are very unique and giving people, always looking for new ways to get involved and help Victim Services Center achieve our goals and mission.

Thank you so much for all that you do!

### Volunteer Opportunities

Become a part of the VSC Team by volunteering on our 24 hour crisis hotline, as an office assistant or at one of our community events!

Contact Lauren Peterson at 610-277-0932 Ext 228 or by email at [lauren-peterson@vscmontcopa.org](mailto:lauren-peterson@vscmontcopa.org)

# Meet Our Board

Victim Services Center welcomes its new Board of Directors and appreciates those who have continued their service. The Board of Directors are volunteers who donate their time, talent and expertise to advance the mission of Victim Services Center. Board members are responsible for fiscal and judiciary responsibilities as well as ensuring that VSC has the necessary resources to achieve its mission.

*The Board of Directors officers are:*

Georgette Howell, President. Georgette is an Assistant Professor at Montgomery County Community College. She resides in Pottstown.

Paulette Patton, Vice President. Paulette is Director of Multicultural Services & Tutorial Programs at Ursinus College. She resides in Collegeville.

Lisa Frikker-Gruss, Secretary. Lisa is an investigator at Quakertown National Bank (QNB). She resides in Harleysville.

Kevin Connolly, CPA, Treasurer. Kevin is a manager with EisnerAmper, LLP in Jenkintown. He resides in Harleysville.

*The Board of Directors members are:*

Kelbin Carolina. Kelbin is a senior accountant in Montgomery County's Controllers Office in Norristown. He resides in Eagleville.



Seated from left: Bernadette Kearney, Esq., Mary Onama, Executive Director

Standing from left: Joan White; Georgette Howell, President; James LaRose; Kelbin Carolina; Kevin Connolly, CPA, Treasurer, Paulette Patton, Vice President; Lisa Frikker-Gruss, Secretary

Bernadette A. Kearney, Esq. Bernadette is an attorney with Hamburg, Rubin, Mullin, Maxwell & Lupin, PC. in Lansdale. She resides in Lafayette Hill.

Joan White. Joan is a vice president of Small Business Relations with TD Bank in King of Prussia. She resides in Zieglerville.

James LaRose. James is a Systems Administrator with Parx Casino in Bensalem. He resides in North Wales.

If you are interested in joining Victim Services Center's Board of Directors, please contact Victim Services Center at 610-277-0932 or at [vscmontcopa@vscmontcopa.org](mailto:vscmontcopa@vscmontcopa.org).

**24-Hour Crisis Hotlines - Toll Free: 888-521-0983  
Sexual Violence: (610) 277-5200  
Other Crimes: (610) ASSIST-1 (277-4781)**

Put Address Label Here

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325 Swede Street, 2nd Floor  
Norristown, PA 19401-4717  
Tel: (610) 277-0932  
Fax: (610) 277-6386  
[www.victimservicescenter.org](http://www.victimservicescenter.org)

