

NEWS RELEASE

WISCONSIN VICTIM WITNESS PROFESSIONALS (WVWP) COMMEMORATES NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK AND ANNOUNCES AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO CRIME VICTIMS

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Ellsworth, Wisconsin — Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. April 19–25 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress achieved, raise awareness of victims' rights and services, and stand with our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime.

The Wisconsin Victim Witness Professionals Association (WVWP) promotes victims' rights and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. Each year WVWP recognizes individuals and businesses for their outstanding service to crime victims. This year, more than 40 people and organizations were nominated for their efforts to advocate for victims, seek justice, bring attention to survivors' concerns, and create new resources and services for those whose lives have been impacted by crime.

The WVWP Crime Victim Service Award for extraordinary service to crime victims in the *Professional* category was awarded to Waukesha District Attorney Sue Opper. D.A. Opper was nominated by the daughter of a deceased victim of a cold-case homicide, as well as by Victim Assistance professionals. David Williams, WVWP President, noted, "It is clear that District Attorney Opper promotes a high standard of victim service in her office, her county and with all of the cases she personally handles, as well." The comments of the homicide survivor added even further to that impression; in particular, she stressed the unfailing courtesy and respect shown to a divided family by the prosecutor. The daughter said she felt that this case has given hope to many families with missing loved ones, as well as giving some peace and closure to her family.

Retired Detective Thomas Bushey, formerly of the City of Elkhorn Police Department received the WVWP Crime Victim Service Award in the *Law Enforcement* category. Walworth County Victim Witness Coordinator Amy Los nominated Detective Bushey for his 40 years of diligence in serving crime victims. Ms. Los wrote about Detective Bushey's communications with, responsiveness to and concern for crime victims, especially victims of sexual assault and children. Included with the nomination was a child's card, that said, "Detective Bushey – thank you for helping me and believing me. You are the best detective in the world."

Capital Credit Union of Calumet County was recognized in the *Business* category. Nominated by District Attorney Nathan Haberman and Victim/Witness Coordinator Julie Leverenz, the nomination describes how the business took care of two tellers who each had a handgun pointed directly in their face by a robber. Capital Credit Union employees offered emotional and physical support to the employee victims and to the other impacted staff, and demonstrated an admirable level of caring and assistance.

James Gmeiner, a long-time volunteer with the Milwaukee Victim Assistance Program, won in the *Volunteer* category. Mr. Gmeiner was nominated by a victim of domestic violence. Although retired, Mr. Gmeiner volunteers his time at the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, greeting domestic violence victims, helping them to understand the process and putting them at ease for court proceedings. The court process can be very intimidating for the victim, but special people like this volunteer provide reassurance, comfort and strength to victims.

The WVWP Award for *Victim Witness Professional* was presented to two individuals this year, Sherrie Dachel of Chippewa County, and Barbara Lande of Dunn county. Ms. Dachel was nominated by her District Attorney and Assistant District Attorney, as well as Victim Witness staff and more. Her nominators noted her career of more than 20 years serving crime victims, and her work on a particularly challenging case in the past year involving the death of several children, and her extraordinary care and respect for the victims' families. D.A. Wade Newell comments make clear that dignity and respect are hallmarks of the manner in which Ms. Dachel treats all victims.

Victim Witness Coordinator Barbara Lande was nominated by prosecutors, Victim Witness, judges, law enforcement, community organizations and her daughters for this year's award. Her nominators noted her lengthy career in victim services that began in 1993, as well as her dedication, compassion, and creativity in implementing new services and programs for victims, such as wiring a waiting room for video capability to allow victims to watch proceedings in more comfort. WVWP President David Williams stated, "It is clear that Ms. Lande has also had a lasting impact on countless victims, her community, and the state."

The Wisconsin Victim Witness Professionals Association also honored two Victim Witness Professionals who retired in the past year for distinguished careers dedicated to crime victims. The *Career of Caring Award* was presented to Beth Hodorowski, retired Ozaukee County Victim Witness Coordinator, and Lisa Playman, retired Columbia County Victim Witness Coordinator. Both of these professionals committed decades of service, advocacy and compassion to crime victims and WVWP is pleased to congratulate them on their well-earned retirements.

Finally, a number of other deserving individuals and organizations received honorable mentions in this year's awards. WVWP commends all of these individuals, and the other professionals and organizations that work on behalf of crime victims throughout the year.

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