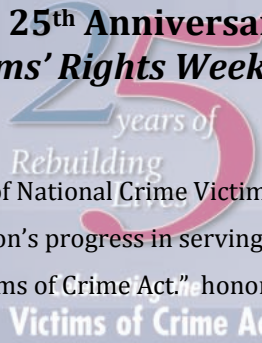




Denton County Celebrates 25th Anniversary of Victims of Crime Act Denton County Crime Victims' Rights Week to Honor Landmark Legislation



April 26 marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to focus on victims of crime and celebrate our nation's progress in serving them. This year's theme, "25 Years of Rebuilding Lives: Celebrating the Victims of Crime Act," honors a landmark national commitment to victims of crime.

Before 1984, victims of crime received little public support. The President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, formed by President Ronald W. Reagan in 1982, found widespread poor treatment of victims by a criminal justice system indifferent to their needs. Although most states had some form of victim compensation, most programs were poorly funded. Despite the few victim assistance programs available in some states and the federal effort to fund victim/witness programs through out the nation, most communities relied on a few grassroots organizations – funded by sporadic provide donations and bake sales- to help victims of crime.

In 1984, moved by the President's Task Force report findings and the work of victim advocates, Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which created the Crime Victims Fund, financed **not** by taxpayers but by fines and penalties paid by offenders. In 25 years, the Fund has grown from \$68 million to more than \$2 billion and is disbursed throughout the nation in amounts determined by Congress every year.

The Fund supports victim compensation programs, which reimburse victims for many out-of-pocket expenses—such as medical care, counseling, funerals, and lost wages—that the victims face in the aftermath of crime. It also helps fund victim assistance programs—such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs—that support victims by providing physical and emotional care and guidance in navigating the criminal justice system. In 2006, VOCA funds supported more than 4,400 public and nonprofit agencies serving almost 4 million victims, and paid more than \$440 million in victim compensation.

"Every day in every state, VOCA shows victims they are not alone," said John W. Gillis, former director of the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. "VOCA represents hope, renewal, and a nation that stands behind victims of crime."

The U.S. Department of Justice will open National Crime Victims' Rights Week on April 23, 2009 and will observe National Crime Victims' Week April 26 – May 2.

Denton County will observe Crime Victims' Rights week April 20 – 24. Everyone in the community is cordially invited to attend a service awards ceremony hosted by the Denton County Crime Victims' Rights Coalition on Thursday, April 23, 2009 at 6 p.m. The ceremony will be held at the Denton County Courts Building in Denton, Texas.