

JUSTICE IN ACTION

VOLUME I, NO. 4

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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear reader,

For more than one month now many of us have been restricted to our homes, leaving only for the essentials. It has been a trying, testing time. It has been a time filled with fear, sickness, and even death for many. And daily, as we see the death toll from COVID-19 climb, it is difficult to hear or read or see anymore negative news.

Yet it is still there. The same ugliness and brutality that pre-existed COVID-19 largely still exists, especially when we are talking about intimate partner violence. Just this week I read of a Kentucky Legislator who was charged with strangulation, assault, and terroristic threatening for alleged acts of domestic violence. Within the same week, I read that domestic violence-related homicides in the United Kingdom more than tripled from the rates in previous years during the three-week period from March 23, 2020 to April 12, 2020. With so much uncertainty and sadness out there, I know it takes commitment and passion for the cause of ending intimate partner violence for you to join us by reading our newsletter this month. For that, I say thank you.

This month, in continuing celebration of our 20th Anniversary, we're going to highlight some of our prior Celebrating Solutions Winners. We're going to take note of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We're going to tell you why it is so important in the quest to end intimate partner violence that Kentucky has made strangulation a standalone criminal offense. We are going to inspire you with Pat Byron's passion in honor of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Finally, we're going to invite you to take care of yourself.

Happy Reading!

Donde Gilbert

PAT BYRON

Seeking Justice, Ensuring Victims' Rights, Inspiring Hope

April 19th–25th was National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVWRW), which recognizes the crime victim advocates, allied professionals, and selfless volunteers who have worked toward a future of inclusive and accessible resources and services for victims of crime. This year's theme was "Seek Justice, Ensure Victims' Rights, Inspire Hope" and we feel there is no one who better embodies this theme than our very own Pat Byron.

Pat Byron is the heart and soul of the Mary Byron Project. This is not an overstatement. It's a fact.

I am sure all of you who read this know Pat's history. You know that her life changed forever on December 6, 1993 when her younger daughter Mary was murdered after leaving her job at the Mall St. Matthews. Mary's story of a life cut short by a former boyfriend has had an impact beyond imagination, and it is not hyperbole to say that hundreds of thousands - if not millions- of victims of intimate partner violence are safer because of the systems put in place in response to her murder.

In 1993, there was no twitter, or facebook, or social media. In order for a story to go viral, it had to be special. And it was Pat Byron who made it her mission to do that. Along with her husband John, Pat lobbied for a law allowing for victim notification. And she didn't stop there. Soon she was a fixture in other states who adopted VINE, and when Mike Davis approached her in 2000 to start a charity in Mary's name, she jumped at the chance.

Pat will tell you she's but a small part of the success of VINE and the Mary Byron Project, but do not believe her. If it were not for her courage, selflessness, and integrity, little could have been accomplished. Her personal tragedy motivated her, and her faith and spirit kept her going.

No one who meets and talks to Pat walks away without being changed for the better. Whether it's the girls from Assumption High School (Mary's alma mater), or the legislators in Frankfort, or people in the highest offices in DC, Pat will go anywhere and speak to anyone if it means she can help inform and change lives. And she certainly has.

At Last, Strangulation is a Crime in Kentucky

By Dorislee Gilbert, JD, Executive Director, The Mary Byron Project

As of June 27, 2019, Kentucky law recognized strangulation as an independent felony crime. Intentional strangulation--that is, impeding the normal breathing or circulation of blood of another person by applying pressure on the throat or neck of the other person or by blocking the nose or mouth of the other person--is now a Class C felony carrying an indeterminate sentence of 5-10 years' imprisonment. Wanton strangulation is a Class D felony carrying an indeterminate sentence of 1-5 years' imprisonment. Under Kentucky law, all sentences for felonies are indeterminate sentences, meaning that although upon final sentencing, the judge imposes a specific sentence within the range allowed by law--for example, 7 years for a Class C felony--the sentence is indeterminate because of various sentence credits that can be awarded by the Department of Corrections as well as the availability of parole. For Class C felony strangulation, an offender would be eligible for parole after having served 20% of the sentence. For Class D felony strangulation, an offender would usually be eligible for parole after having served 15% of the sentence.

[Click here to read more on our blog](#)



Self Care in Trying Times

"That which is to give light must endure burning." -Victor Frankl, Austrian psychiatrist, author and Holocaust survivor

It has been said that empathy is your pain in my heart. Many of us in the helping professions know firsthand that working with those who have experienced violence can take a toll on our professional and personal lives. With the added stress and anxiety of a worldwide pandemic, it's more important than ever to talk about ways that we can take care of ourselves in order to minimize harm, both to ourselves and our clients. Check out our online workshop on Secondary Trauma and Self Care for Helping Professionals.

Celebrating Solutions 20th Anniversary **AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE**

Looking Back on Our Winners...

In recognition of MBP's 20th anniversary we will award one final Celebrating Solutions Award, the Award for Excellence, which will come with a \$20,000 prize. This will be presented to one of our former winning programs which has demonstrated continued innovation, leadership, and success in ending intimate partner violence. Each month leading up to the selection of the winner of the Award for Excellence, will we spotlight several of our incredible former winners and their services to victims of intimate partner violence. This first month we will look at several of our early winners:

1. Pathways to Safety International, formerly Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center, Portland, OR, 2003 winner. The program was founded in 1999 by Paula Lucas, who with her three young sons escaped a foreign land where they all had been victims of severe abuse by her husband. In the past 20 years the program has grown from a small grassroots organization to a globally recognized organization serving over 10,000 American victims of intimate partner violence in over 165 countries. Additionally, Paula published a book, *Harvesting Stones*, which recounts the abuse they suffered and their harrowing journey to escape to the safety in the US <https://pathwaystosafety.org/>
2. WomensLaw, Washington, D.C., 2005 winner. Currently a program of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Womenslaw.org provides state specific, easily understood legal information for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Topics such as restraining/protective orders, custody, divorce, housing laws, immigration, gun laws, etc., are covered. Additionally, the website has links to dv organizations, legal services providers, courthouses, and national organizations. <https://www.womenslaw.org/>
3. Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DV LEAP), 2006 winner. Founded in 2003, DV LEAP provides pro bono legal appeals for survivors of intimate partner violence in Washington, D.C. and across the country. It also provides training for judges, lawyers, mental health professionals and other disciplines that serve victims and survivors. In 17 years, DV LEAP has provided legal appeals in 22 states, participated in 12 US Supreme Court cases, and has established itself as a leader on issues such as the misuse and invalid basis of Parental Alienation. <https://www.dvleap.org/>



SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which gives us the opportunity to talk about the intersection of domestic violence and sexual assault. In the United States, 1 in 5 women will be raped in her lifetime.¹ Sexual violence is most often perpetrated by someone a survivor knows, and this includes intimate partners. 51% of female victims who reported sexual assaults were assaulted by an intimate partner.¹

Sexual violence in intimate relationships often occurs along with other forms of controlling and abusive behavior, such as physical and/or emotional abuse. In fact, two-thirds of women who have been physically assaulted by a partner have also been sexually assaulted by that partner.²

Survivors of all forms of sexual assault face significant challenges in the search for healing and justice. For those sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, those barriers can be even higher, which might explain why marital rape is the most underreported form of sexual assault. According to the Joyful Heart Foundation, an organization working toward ending the backlog of untested rape kits, “these cases are less frequently investigated and prosecuted. The evidence collected in these cases is rarely tested; kits from known offender cases comprise a large percentage of the backlog.”

1. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf
2. <https://www.rainn.org/articles/intimate-partner-sexual-violence>

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