



VICTIMS' RIGHTS: STRENGTH IN UNITY

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

APRIL 23 THROUGH 29 is **National Crime Victims' Rights Week**. Texas joins the nation this month in recognizing and honoring victims and survivors of violent crime. We often talk about the courage it takes for victims of abuse, domestic violence and other violent crimes to come forward and report the terrible offenses committed against them. This year's national theme of "*Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity*" embodies the combined efforts of advocacy groups, law enforcement officials, victim service providers and volunteers who are also touched by the courage of survivors.

Rebuilding lives damaged by the emotional, physical and financial aftermath of violence takes a unified approach. In 2004, the Texas Attorney General's office provided more than \$85 million in medical, funeral and counseling benefits for Texas crime victims. In addition to offering financial assistance to victims, my office was authorized by the Texas Legislature to distribute more than \$36 million in grants to organizations that assist victims with emergency shelter, counseling, court accompaniment and other direct services for healing and recovery.

The importance of our partnerships with victim advocacy organizations and

the local law enforcement community was evidenced in the case of a 32-year-old woman who was brutally attacked by her husband, a man who had prior convictions for extreme violence. A victim assistance liaison in the woman's local sheriff's department helped expedite the filing of her crime victim compensation claim, while a community domestic violence shelter provided her with temporary shelter. The Crime Victims' Compensation Program within my office determined that the woman was eligible for relocation assistance, counseling and medical benefits. This unified effort allowed the woman to be safely relocated to another state and gave her the resources and support she needed to find a path to survival.

As part of the law enforcement community, I am deeply grateful for the collaborative spirit of police officers, county and district attorneys, and local prosecutors around the state who assist investigators in my office in protecting Texans from violent crimes.

For instance, the Cyber Crimes and Fugitive Units within my office have combined for more than 400 arrests of child sex predators with the help of local jurisdictions, as well as national organizations such as the National

Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The success rate of these two programs exemplifies how a unified front by all of us in law enforcement can help prevent children from becoming victims of sexual abuse or assault by rounding up parole violators, arresting sex offenders who have failed to meet Texas sex offender registration requirements, and punishing dangerous criminals who solicit unsuspecting children online.

The Crime Victim Services Division within my office is privileged to partner with crime victim advocates across Texas, including law enforcement officers, victim assistance coordinators, crime victim liaisons, counselors, sexual assault nurse examiners, and countless volunteers to deliver services to crime victims and their families with efficiency and respect.

This month, ceremonies and observances around the state will honor victims and survivors of crime. I encourage all Texans to participate in events within their communities to help promote "Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity." Together, we can win the fight for crime victims' rights and services and continue to assert the generous spirit that makes Texas great.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



NATIONAL
CRIME VICTIMS'
RIGHTS WEEK

Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity April 23-29, 2006

USDOJ Office for Victims of Crime
(800) 851-3420
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ncvrw

To find out about local activities in your community, contact your local law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office or any local nonprofit organizations that offer assistance to crime victims.

The Crime Victims Services Division within the Office of the Attorney General partners with organizations around the state to help victims find help and healing, including:

- domestic violence shelters
- rape crisis centers
- hotlines
- victim advocacy groups

Texas Attorney General's
Crime Victim Services Division:
Toll Free: (800) 983-9933
crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us
www.oag.state.tx.us



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT