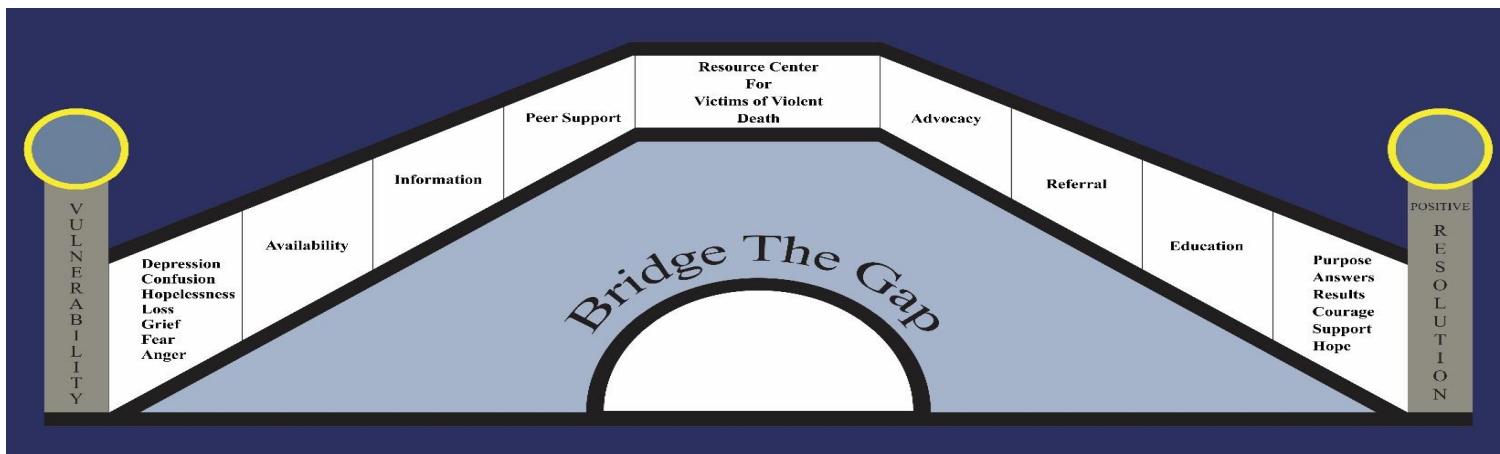




August 2017 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another and the Certified Victim Advocate for the Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death

This month we are continuing to explore the “BRIDGE,” our logo for The Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death. Our mission is to “bridge the gaps” in availability of information and services that can impede and discourage victims/families trying to manage in the aftermath of a violent death.



The Resource Center’s Mission

Our mission involves bringing a survivor from a point of vulnerability - the beginning of your journey - to a place of informed decision-making and next steps to healing and some type of positive resolution. This process will take a good long while, years, to get to a position of positive resolution, which means that you are finding that you can go on, remembering your loved one as you go, that your life is not the same, but whole for the most part. That is not to say that you don’t remember the agony, the pain or the brokenness you have experienced or how it has affected you and your family in the long term. No, all of these feelings and results will make up your “new life.”

We continue with our year of self-care as we explore the next part of our bridge of recovery and support:

Peer Support and Advocacy



The third stepping stone:

Peer support/Sharing and Caring Groups

In our agency, our peers are our fellow survivors who have had a loved one murdered, someone who has survived an attempted murder, someone who has a death that is undetermined and those families who believe that a suicide could really be a homicide.

*I am your peer regardless of the fact that I have been a certified victim advocate for 12 years. True, I have extensive training and knowledge about criminal victimization, grief support, victim rights and the criminal and civil justice systems, **but I still am the mother of a murdered son.** I started out in the same devastating loss as many of you have experienced when our Kevin was murdered with his two friends. I have experienced many of the same agonizing physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual reactions that you have experienced and are experiencing. Each of our losses is different, but we all understand each other and our unique needs. Yes, in this world, we are unique among survivors of other forms of violence. All failed efforts to stop senseless, horrible violence lead to where we live. It is the end of the road where we often feel that there is no hope for any kind of redemption, recovery or resolution.*

However, even as we live through our mostly broken lives, we have gained wisdom, coping skills and experiences that we can share with our fellow journeyers. We are walking text books of knowledge about so many things that others will never understand, nor do we want them to know. We can share our knowledge and experience with other survivors, as well as others we encounter on our everyday journeys in the world around us. We can influence, comfort, support, educate, and change the attitudes and opinions of those we encounter. We are powerful even when we are at our weakest point, even then, we can help others in many ways!

Support groups / Sharing and Caring groups are places where we can find the freedom to share, comfort, educate, support and sincerely care about our fellow survivors. When everyone else is tired of hearing your story, your sharing group members understand your need to tell it again and again. Sometimes, our families and others don't understand why we are angry, in a group, we can talk about it as often as necessary to understand our feelings without someone asking us to "quit being mad." In a group, you will find that you are not alone. There, you can laugh or cry with people who understand your pain or unexpected joy. It's a place to learn about ourselves and how this journey and the criminal and civil justice systems work. We do have Spanish speakers available if you need that service. It's a place to be cared for as you care about others in the group. The hardest step is the first one into a sharing and caring group meeting, but soon you will realize that you are welcomed with open arms and understanding, warm hearts. We can also meet with you and your family here at the office or at your home as a group. Recently, I met with a family in their home and it was a perfect place for their family to share, cry, learn and laugh together.

Right now, we have a very active, wonderful sharing and caring group in Los Lunas. These great people are compassionate listeners who are willing to share their experiences and feelings with others within their group who may need encouragement, support and concern as well as finding help for themselves. They make sure that they are at the meetings for the others who may come. They attend other group members' court hearings and check in when people miss meetings. If you live in the area, you are most welcome to join us the last Wednesday of each month from 6-8pm at the Heritage Park Wellness Center. They are waiting for you to join them!

We are finding more survivors in ABQ who are requesting sharing groups so we hope to re-start the ABQ group this fall, keep your eyes "peeled" for more information.

If you are interested in coming to a group, please let us know so we can start planning this new group soon.



The fourth stepping stone:

Advocacy

Here at the Resource Center; we believe that our families need every possible kind of support that we can find to help them through this excruciating experience. Our community needs to know how the violence that rocks our worlds affects our cities and state. We believe that a well-supported victim family will be better able to handle all of the problems they encounter if they have someone on their side to assist them.

I am a certified victim advocate - certified through the National Victim Advocate Training Program with the National Office of Victim Assistance which requires 32 hours of training every two years. Pat and Aussy and I have all taken the 40 hr. Victim Advocacy Online Training Course, required of us by our grantor, the NM Crime Victims Reparation Commission to receive monies from the Victims of Crime Act to provide assistance to you. We feel very strongly that we need to be well trained to assist you in many ways and when we don't have the answers; we ask others to help. We have a list of referral programs that we believe can help you find assistance for your many needs.

We can advocate for families in as many ways as there are needs for a family: We write letter, makes calls, outreach to law enforcement, utility companies, housing authorities, investigators, the State Attorney's office, Federal agencies, coroners' offices and the Office of the Medical Investigator; just to list a few. It does help in some cases to have your requests presented on our agency letterhead.

We can help you fill out your Crime Victims Reparation Commission application; sometimes it seems very confusing. We can file those applications on your behalf as well. You deserve to be reimbursed for costs resulting from your victimization.

We can be present, with permission of the agency, for meetings or hearings, with police, DA's, prosecutors, detectives or crime victim reparation discussions to be a supportive voice and listener.

We do community outreach to help others know about the plight of our survivors. During the year, with the assistance of our great volunteers, we go to city park celebrations where we bring information for others who may not know about our survivors or of our agency. We hold classes, like Lunch and Learning, which are presentations by professionals on many useful survivors' topics.

In December, we have our annual Snowflake Memorial service here at our office complex where we remember each of you and your loved ones who have been taken by violence.

Lastly, I can go to court with you so you have someone with you. Sometimes your DA's advocate may be busy and not able to attend hearings, and I can be there to help you understand what is happening and to make sure that you are recognized as an important part of the case against your perpetrator.

This coming fall, the Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office is starting a new advocacy program staffed by community survivors and volunteers as well as agencies like the Resource Center to help victim families. If you would like more info about volunteering to help us with this program, please go to the 2nd Judicial District Attorney's Office website to sign up. We see this as a great opportunity to reach survivors quicker for services; this might be your way to bring meaning to your victimization.

We are thinking of you today and we are here to help as much as possible.



“Bridge Over Troubled Water”

When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all
I'm on your side, oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down...

“Like a bridge over troubled water....” Simon and Garfunkel 1970

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjNgn4r6SOA>

We can be the friends that can't be found – call or e-mail us!

Joan, Pat, and Aussy