

DVLN ANNUAL AWARENESS CEREMONY

MICHAEL KEHS, Court Administrator, DVLN Chair, Presiding

In honor of DV Awareness Month, the annual DVLN Awareness Ceremony took place in Court Room "A" at the Montgomery County Court House on Tuesday, October 8 at 12 noon. This year's ceremony was dedicated to the memory of Chuck Gallun, founder of SAFE, a unique program created for the purpose of allowing the Batterer/Abuser to acknowledge his battering personality, to understand how and why he is caught up in the cycle of abuse, helping him to believe he can opt for change. This program is associated with Creative Health Services in Pottstown and is availed county-wide.

Jenn Stolfus of Creative Health spoke in honor of Chuck, noting his long time contribution to DV awareness throughout the greater Delaware Valley area, pondering just how his program can be kept alive without his enigmatic presence!

The initial DVLN honorary award was presented to the Honorable Rhonda Daniele, Common Pleas Court Judge, for her outstanding service within the PFA Hearing court for the past two decades. Judge Daniele spoke of the many changes evolving over her years of service, none more valued than that rendered by the volunteer corps from non-profit agencies in the area, whose dedication to filers and their needs has assured a more expeditious overall process.

The second DVLN honorary award was presented to recently retired ADA Wallis Brooks, Captain of the District Attorney's Task Force, for her diligent service to the criminal prosecution of DV defendants on behalf of victims/survivors of abuse; her court record speaks volumes as to her compassionate work. In her absence, District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman accepted this award, speaking of Ms Brooks in glowing terms as a dedicated fighter for victim's rights, noting that upon her return, Ms Brooks will become a consultant with Mission Kids, a program which assists children involved within the court system process.

Chief Willie Richet of the Norristown Police Department, a long-time member of DVLN, presented a check from the Thomas Barone Scholarship Fund to two deserving officers; this Fund was created in honor of a life sacrificed while on a DV call several years ago. Chief Richet spoke highly of Officer Barone and of the ongoing work of the community on behalf of DV Awareness.

Lastly, Tommie Wilkins, Director of Training and Education for Laurel House, announced the winners of the annual Teen DV Poster Campaign, the winning posters being displayed on easels at the front of the room; several different art forms were represented, each of which was uniquely powerful as to the story spoken within the creative vision. This has become a pleasurable feature of the annual ceremony for the past several years, allowing awareness to be spread throughout the younger community.

In attendance were representatives of County law enforcement, officers of the court, Common Pleas Court Judges, Magistrates from the District Courts, Sheriff's department personnel, directors, staff and members of DV associated organizations along with many interested citizens from the community at large.