



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2015
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV

OJP
(202) 514-2007
TTY (866) 544-5309

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS 12 INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS FOR ADVANCING RIGHTS AND SERVICES FOR CRIME VICTIMS

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Eric Holder will preside over the National Crime Victims’ Rights Service Awards ceremony at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21. The event honors 12 individuals and programs for their extraordinary actions to bring positive and lasting changes in the lives of crime victims.

“The Department of Justice is proud to recognize the tremendous contributions of dedicated colleagues, passionate advocates and extraordinary partners in the field of victim services,” said Attorney General Eric Holder. “From safeguarding survivors of sexual violence to assisting victims of mass marketing fraud, the recipients of today’s awards have been instrumental in our nationwide effort to protect the most vulnerable among us, to prevent and combat crime, and to help victims find hope and seek justice.”

The department’s Office for Victims of Crime leads communities across the country in observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and hosts an award ceremony each year. President Reagan proclaimed the first Victims’ Rights Week in 1981, calling for greater sensitivity to the rights and needs of victims. For 2015, the week is observed from April 19 through 25, with the theme *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims.*

Following is a list of the award recipients, who were nominated by their colleagues in the field and selected by the Attorney General:

The **Allied Professional Award** recognizes an individual or organization outside the victim assistance field for services or contributions to the victims’ field. **Recipients:** Mary Kay Inc. of Addison, Texas, and Assistant District Attorney Norman A. Gahnof of the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s Office.

The **Crime Victims Financial Restoration Award** recognizes individuals, programs, organizations or teams that developed innovative ways of funding services for crime victims or instituted innovative approaches for securing financial restoration for crime victims. **Recipient:** A team of representatives from the U.S. Attorney’s Office of the Middle District of Pennsylvania, the department’s Asset Forfeiture Money Laundering Section and U.S. Postal Inspection Service for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The **National Crime Victim Service Award** honors extraordinary efforts in direct service to crime victims. **Recipients:** Karen Kalergis, a victim advocate from Austin, Texas, and Executive Director Alecia “Lisa” Thompson-Heth of Wiconia Wawokiya Inc., of the Crow Creek Sioux Indian Reservation, Fort Thompson, South Dakota.

The **Crime Victims' Rights Award** honors those whose efforts to advance or enforce crime victims' rights have benefited crime victims at the state, tribal or national level. **Recipient:** Laurel Wemhoff, a survivor and advocate from Washington, D.C.

The **Ronald Wilson Reagan Public Policy Award** honors leadership, innovation and vision that leads to noteworthy changes in public policy that benefit crime victims. **Recipients:** Dr. Marcus Smith and attorney Matthew Smith, of Little Rock, Arkansas, and Director of Victim Services Suzanne Breedlove of the District Attorneys Council in Oklahoma City.

The **Professional Innovation in Victim Service Award** recognizes a program, organization or individual who has helped to expand the reach of victims' rights and services. **Recipient:** Judge Paul M. Herbert of the Franklin County Municipal Court in Columbus, Ohio.

The **Special Courage Award** recognizes extraordinary bravery in the aftermath of a crime or courageous act on behalf of a victim or potential victim. **Recipients:** Ronald Cotton and Jennifer Thompson, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The **Vision 21 Crime Victims Research Award** recognizes individual researchers or research teams that make a significant contribution to the nation's understanding of crime victims' issues. **Recipient:** Rebecca Campbell, of Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

The **Volunteer for Victims Award** honors individuals for their extraordinary and selfless efforts resulting in positive and lasting changes in the lives of crime victims. **Recipient:** LaWanda Hawkins, of San Pedro, California.

Descriptive narratives and videos of the contributions of recipients are available at Office for Victims of Crime's [Gallery](#).

About the Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

OJP, headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at www.ojp.gov.

###

15-482

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE USE THE CONTACTS IN THE MESSAGE OR CALL THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT 202-514-2007.