

By Joan Wallach

The GPH News was recently invited to learn more about The Denver Center for Crime Victims (DCCV) at a fundraising brunch at Kate's at 35th Ave. DCCV is one of 19,000 nonprofit organizations in Colorado. It is not pleasant to dwell on victimization and for that reason many of us may not know of the 24/7 efforts of the DCCV.

We learned DCCV is a relatively new name for what was the Denver Victims Service Center, and that is was chosen with care. Clients of DCCV felt it was important that Victim remain in its name and that the logo continued as a broken heart, representing their experiences. DCCV works to assist people who have been victimized to overcome trauma and eventually heal. DCCV reaches into Park Hill by virtue of its services to crime victims, its advocacy and crime education programs, the diverse board of directors (including Park Hill residents Dr. Michael Earnest and Lynn Smith) and by being a national model for victims' assistance. **Services**

DCCV has been providing services since 1987, serving over 122,000 victims in its first twenty years of service. Board President, Mary Anne Castellano says, "DCCV deals with everything from purse snatching to homicide." All DCCV services are free, confidential and offered to anyone of any age residing in Denver or victimized in Denver.

There is a 24-hour hotline for English and Spanish speakers, and TTY for the hearing and speech impaired; a Legal Immigration Clinic; an Elder/Disability Program; support groups for people who have experienced or been affected by traumatic events related to homicide or suicide; Brothers, an eight-week support group for boys and men ages six through 17, who have experienced or witnessed violence; *The Girls' Group*, an eight-week support group for girls and young women, ages six through 17, who have witnessed or experienced violence; *Kinship Care Programs* to help grandparents, parents and guardians face today's challenges in raising children; and *Parenting After Trauma* Workshops, for parents whose children have been affected by trauma.

The purpose of the DCCV Emergency Fund is to help meet the immediate financial needs of DCCV Clients. Assistance may be as small as \$25 or as great as a few hundred dollars and may pay for needs as varied as new locks, new identification, and bus tickets.

The Translation & Interpreting Center is a for-profit arm of DCCV and provides translation services for more than 40 languages and dialects.

Culturally appropriate services including short-term crisis counseling, case management, information and referral, trauma information, advocacy, assistance with emergency services, community outreach and education are all provided by staff and volunteers at the Center.

Leadership and Awards

Cathy D. Phelps, M.A., LCSW is the Executive Director of the DCCV. Cathy sets a high bar and unusual expectations for herself, the staff of 20 plus, the board of directors and many volunteers. DCCV has a self-care plan policy, which requires employees to set emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual and physical goals every year as part of their annual evaluations. In 2002 *Colorado Parent Magazine* honored DCCV as one of the *Best Companies for Working Families* in Colorado. Ms. Phelps models coping with the stresses of leadership and working with people impacted by trauma by prioritizing her health and well-being. She actively pursues her interest in African and Latin dance, is a member of a local book club and bicycling club, and a *Park Hill Yoga* enthusiast. She is also a long-time student of Spanish and American Sign Language. Cathy tells us that she "credits these

self-care activities for her ability to grow, even flourish in a field where burnout and vicarious trauma regularly takes a toll on service providers.” Cathy prides herself on a work environment that has at its center “a commitment to wellness and wholeness in every aspect of the job.”

Under Cathy Phelps' tenure DCCV has also been honored with the *Martin Luther King Jr. Business Social Responsibility Award* in 2002 and the *Colorado Ethics in Business Award* in 2005. Ms. Phelps, who also teaches at Metropolitan State College and University of Colorado at Denver in the Graduate School of Public Administration, has been honored with a 2005 *Living Portraits of African American Women Award* given by the Denver Section of the National Council on Negro Women and the African American Research Library. Ms. Phelps received the *Victims Services Award of Excellence* in 1999 from the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the 2002 *Sojourner Truth Award* from the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

When Cathy Phelps joined DCCV she understood that diversity was something that some staff and board members thought of as a burden, just another thing on the “to do” list. She had a vision and led DCCV to operate a culturally competent program for victims of crime with a staff that builds upon the assets of their individual cultures. For this she was named a *Champion of Inclusiveness* by the Denver Foundation.

Volunteer/Intern Program

The DCCV Volunteer/Intern program provides 40 hours of training to work with crime victims at The Center. The training is registered with all colleges in the front range area and is offered three times a year. Content of the training is listed on the DCCV website and readers interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the Center at 303-860-0660. Ms. Phelps tells us that DCCV is “always looking for community invested board members who are willing to be ambassadors for the agency.”

Norm Early Jr. Victims' Rights Award

Each year, at their annual fundraiser, *That Jazz Thing*, DCCV honors those who have made a significant impact on the lives of crime victims with the prestigious *Norm Early Jr. Victims' Rights Award*.

This year Verizon won the *2008 Corporate Award* for its Hopeline-- a program through which recycled cell phones are given to victims of domestic violence and cash grants are given to organizations promoting domestic violence awareness and in its prevention.

Heather Callahan received the *2008 Community Member Award*. Callahan, who was a victim of a horrific crime fifteen years ago and a client of DCCV at that time, was in the audience of the Oprah Show in 2006 when Oprah gave each audience member \$1000 to “pay it forward.” Heather returned to Denver and through DCCV met a Denver woman who had been shot in the face. Callahan presented a check to her for \$3,600. When Oprah's viewers got word of the woman who had been shot, DCCV's phones rang and e-mails poured in with support. In 2007 Callahan established her own Heather's Hope Fund and continues to give her own money in an effort to assist other victims of crime.

Denver Police Chief Gerald Whitman received the *2008 Civil Service Award*. Whitman has a thirty year career as a police officer. He joined the Denver Police Department in 1982 and was named Chief of Police in February 2000. Whitman serves on several boards and was a founding member of the Denver Police Department Front Rangers Cycling Club, a non-profit youth cycling club for at-risk children, and the Denver Police Foundation.

DCCV honored Chief Whitman for his leadership on crime victims issues, including his membership in a major funding agency which distributes over one million dollars annually to crime victims programs.

Resource Development

Spotlight on the Denver Center for Crime Victims

DCCV receives funding from the Denver Victim Assistance Law Enforcement Board, the Victims of Crime Act, the Violence Against Women Act, Mile High United Way, and numerous foundations, businesses and private donors.

Special events are held to raise awareness and funds. Yet another feather in DCCV's cap is that 92 percent of each dollar received is spent on programs and only eight percent is spent on administrative services.

Denver Men With Heart

Join DCCV for "An Auction with Action" including happy hour appetizers, cash bar and an exciting live and silent auction featuring the services and skills offered by Denver area men on Thursday, October 23 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. at The Cork House Wine Restaurant, 4900 E. Colfax Avenue.

Macy's Community Shopping Day

On Saturday, November 22, at Macy's in Cherry Creek Mall, 100 percent of fundraising tickets sales will benefit DCCV programs. Tickets are \$10 and include a \$10.00 coupon toward a purchase of \$25.00 or more, and is also good for discounts between 10 and 20 percent.

DCCV Wish List

DCCV's wish list is available on the website. Current priorities include blackberries, snacks for the children's programs, journals, and a video camera. DCCV's office address is confidential. Correspondence can be directed to The Denver Center for Crime Victims, P.O. Box 18975, Denver, CO, 80218. Visit the website at www.denervictims.org or call 303-860-0660. The GPH News salutes the Denver Center for Crime Victims for their often heart wrenching work to help victims, families and friends impacted by crime.