

MAY 2022

ADVOCATE

ad'·vo·kāt'

(verb): to support, assist others on a cause or issue of concern; to act as an advocate for others.



A NOTE FROM OUR MLKY STATE DIRECTOR

Friends,
What a week.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 24-30, 2022, will go down as a memorable and historic one for crime victims in Kentucky, for their families, and for the thousands of people who advocate for victims.

It was a great – and often emotional – week of events and gatherings throughout the Commonwealth in honor of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, culminating near week's end with the Kentucky Supreme Court's unanimous decision to dismiss a legal challenge against Marsy's Law.

Indeed, for Kentuckians, it was a week like no other.

Within the pages this issue of Advocate, you will see articles and photos that capture some of the week's activities and special moments (and there were many). Yet, for many of us, the most poignant moments of the week were likely private – where we paused to reflect on difficult past events in our lives or shared a private moment with a friend or colleague or fellow-advocate for crime victims.

And then there is the Kentucky Supreme Court decision, so fittingly announced during this already-meaningful week – an affirmation to all Kentuckians that crime victims' rights are forever guaranteed in the state constitution.

It was a week to remember, and thousands of Kentuckians played a role. Yet, as we all know, there is always more work to get done.

I am grateful for being a part of this journey, and look forward to working alongside you as we continue our efforts.

In gratitude,
Emily



A NOTE FROM OUR BILL SPONSOR



"First and foremost, I want to thank you, ALL of you. Your unrelenting passion, advocacy and action helped deliver protections for tomorrow's crime victims across the Commonwealth. Your efforts helped put Marsy's Law on the ballot (twice!), and into our constitution. Since its ratification by voters, Marsy's Law has been increasingly used in courts across Kentucky for the benefit of victims. The constitutional limits of our amendment may be tested, but as long as victims and survivors have champions like each of you, it will continue to stand, guaranteeing victims are not ignored, but made a permanent and valuable voice in the criminal justice system."

Kentucky State Senator Whitney Westerfield

TRUTH WITHOUT TRAUMA



Marsy's Law for Kentucky State Director Dr. Emily Bonistall Postel -- along with Dorislee Gilbert, J.D., former executive director of The Mary Byron Project -- had the opportunity to present during the **University of Louisville Law Review's 2022 Symposium**, "Mental Health and the Legal Profession."

During the February event, Emily and Dorislee addressed the topic of **"Truth Without Trauma: Reducing Re-Traumatization through the Justice System,"** designed to offer solutions for legal professionals as they address the future of mental health, the practice of law, and the judicial system.

Their paper on the topic will be published this spring through the University of Louisville Law Review.

SUPPORTING RURAL VICTIMS

Rural survivors often face multiple challenges when requesting and receiving medical support after a sexual assault. Recognizing this gap in services and the need for stronger sexual assault medical response support in our rural regions, **Ampersand Sexual Violence Resource Center** collaborated with Still Waters Center to create a **Mobile Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence (SAFE) clinic**.

This RV is a complete medical clinic that carries trained SANE providers to *quite literally* meet survivors where they are. It is the first of its kind in KY and their efforts can be supported [here](#).

RAISING AWARENESS

Advocates across the Commonwealth work all year long to prevent abuse and support victims. As each of these months come to an end, we are reminded that the work doesn't end. We are so grateful for their steadfast commitment to victims in the Commonwealth.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

During Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, we had the opportunity to co-host a virtual event with The Chloe Randolph Organization. The event raised awareness about the signs of teen dating violence, highlighting that one in three teens in the U.S will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from someone they're in a relationship with before they become adults. If you suspect abuse, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

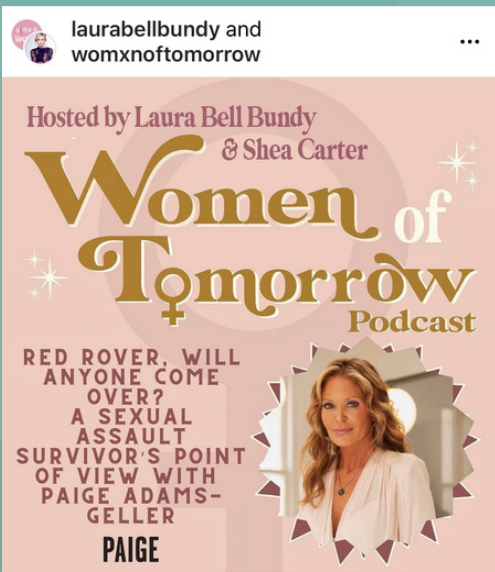
The end of March kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with the Family & Children's Place Rally to End Child Abuse. This annual event provided the opportunity for the community to gather and hear officials and advocates address child abuse, violence, exploitation, neglect, and prevention ... as well as intervention and restoration efforts for children and families. Catch the Facebook Live event [here](#) and media coverage [here](#).



"For the people in these 17 counties, having the ability to get a safe exam from a specially trained nurse, plus access to crisis counseling and legal and medical advocacy will make such a difference in the lives of so many,"

-Lieutenant Governor Jacqueline Coleman

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS & PREVENTION MONTH



WOMEN OF TOMORROW FOUNDATION

Dr. Emily Bonistall Postel joined the Women of Tomorrow Foundation's SAAPM podcast with special guest Paige Adams-Gellar for a candid discussion on sexual assault, long term impact, recovery, and what consent really means. Click [HERE](#) for the tea analogy that Emily discusses in her remarks to explain the concept of consent.

KASAP & SAAPM KICKOFF: KENTUCKY ASSOCIATION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS

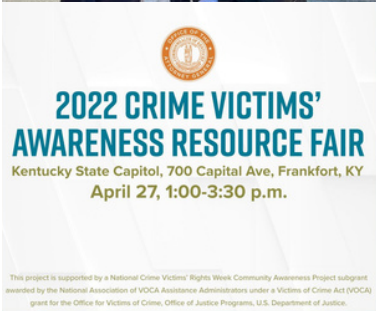
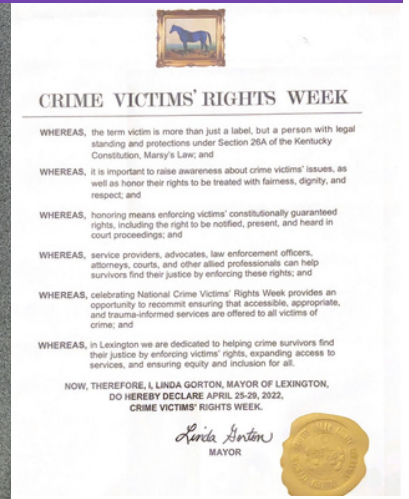
KASAP kicked off Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month with an event educating the community on the current efforts to treat and prevent sexual assault, as well as provide opportunities and resources for the community to take an active role in prevention. Several awards were presented, including the "SAAMY" to survivor advocate, **Hilary B. Sykes**.



NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK



MLKY State Director gives remarks during the Fayette County NCVRW event.



Dorisee Gilbert was presented with an award during the Louisville NCVRW Awareness Event



Honoring and Remembering Victims in Grayson, KY at the event hosted by the National Chapter of Justice & Hope for Crime Victims

Thank you to ALL of you for the incredibly important work that you do. As you all know, helping survivors of crime find justice takes more than a just outcome in the courtroom. It's about listening to and making victims' needs and wishes a priority, enforcing victims' rights, and providing victims with access to resources and services that help them heal.

As we consider the significance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week and honor crime victims across our state, I'd like us to also celebrate the progress we have made. During the last two years, the landscape for crime victims in Kentucky has shifted – for the better.

We have come a long way toward safeguarding victims' rights in our state. I will forever be grateful that Kentuckians sent a clear message that victims do matter, do deserve justice, and do deserve to have their rights upheld. By passing Marsy's Law into our state constitution in November 2020, we have ensured the inclusion, participation, and respect of crime victims and their families as they navigate the criminal justice system.

We are in the midst of a cultural shift within virtually every sector of the criminal legal system. Police officers, prosecutors, judges, social workers, health care workers, and advocacy organizations are working together – talking to one another – about protecting the rights of victims.

I witnessed this promising dynamic this past legislative session where some legislators sought the input of victims and advocacy organizations for discussions about proposed legislation that may have had an impact on victims of crime and their constitutional rights.

We were invited to the table. Given the opportunity to be heard. And then those legislators listened. They made decisions and cast votes with victim input playing a role. Victims' voices were heard and they mattered. As new policies and programs were created, crime victims' rights were part of the conversation – not an afterthought, not on the fringes, but in their own seat at the table. Crime victims' rights mattered.

Since the passage of Marsy's Law, crime victims and advocacy organizations are increasingly at the table when important discussions and decisions transpire regarding both individual criminal cases, as well as wide-reaching state policy and legislation.

I've heard a few folks describe these types of conversations as a positive, unintended consequence of Marsy's Law. But this type of cultural and systemic shift that respects and upholds crime victims rights so that victims have a meaningful role in the criminal legal system -- that has always been the intent of Marsy's Law.

So, during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we express our unyielding support for victims of crime, and our unending gratitude for those who support and advocate for victims. I also want to express my deep appreciation to those lawmakers who made sure victims' voices had a seat at the table.

It is my hope ... and my sincere belief ... that we will continue to gain more seats at more tables. Not just this week, but every week. That will require all of us doing more of what we have already been doing ... more hard work, more collaboration, more communication, and lending more support to one another.

As important as it is to celebrate progress made in raising awareness of victims' rights and services, we must also acknowledge there is still work to be done. That work centers on continuing to ensure the enforcement of victims' rights, expanding access to victim services, and providing equity and inclusion for all. Justice includes treatment of victims with compassion and respect long after a criminal case ends.

As I reflect on the past two years, it's clear to me that the passage of Marsy's Law has created two parallel paths of justice and protection for victims of crime. The more tangible path is one on which Kentucky crime victims navigate the criminal justice system. As I stand next to this memorial that reads "crime victims for equal rights" – I can't help but think about all of the Kentuckians who walked along this path in hopes it would one day lead us here -- a path that is now lined with a clearly defined set of constitutional rights.

We can also ensure victims have meaningful access to justice through education, policy guidance, and best practices to uphold these rights – and by respecting the experiences of crime victims. This second path is about systemic change and it is one of the most critical ways we protect rights, access, and equity for all victims.

There is a lot that has been accomplished during the last few years, but there is opportunity ahead of us to continue to do more, and to do better. Because when we know better, we do better. If you're unsure where to start, I encourage you to use your place at the table to be a voice for victims, and when you can, make room at the table! Invite victims' voices to be heard. And then ... listen.

For crime victim's rights, the landscape is better

Helping survivors of crime find justice means more than a just outcome in the courtroom.

It's about enforcing victims' rights, listening to and making victims' needs and wishes a priority, and providing victims with access to resources and services that help them heal.

As Kentuckians pause to consider the significance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week April 24-30 and honor crime victims across our state, we take a moment to consider how the landscape regarding crime victims in Kentucky has shifted – for the better – during the last two years.

This year's theme is "Rights, Access, Equity, for all victims."

Since Kentucky voters overwhelmingly approved Marsy's Law in November 2020, which ensured the inclusion, participation, and respect of crime victims and their families as they navigate the criminal legal system, we have come a long way toward safeguarding victims' rights in our state.

We are forever grateful that Kentuckians sent a clear message that victims do matter, do deserve justice, and do deserve to have their rights upheld.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a time to celebrate progress made in raising awareness of victims' rights and services, while also realizing there is still work to be done. That work centers on continuing to ensure the enforcement of victims' rights, expanding access to victim services, and providing equity and inclusion for all. Additionally, justice includes treatment of victims with compassion and respect long after the criminal case ends.

Ensuring victims have meaningful access to justice can also occur through education, policy guidance, and best practices to uphold their rights – and through respecting the experiences of crime victims. We have seen progress and positive change during the last two years where victims of crime and their families have a new-found voice and respect.

Since the passage of Marsy's Law, crime victims and advocacy organizations are increasingly at the table when important discussions and decisions transpire regarding individual criminal cases, as well as wide-reaching state policy and legislation.

During the just-completed state legislative session we witnessed this promising dynamic. During discussions regarding proposed legislation that could impact victims of crime, we were given the opportunity by some legislators to provide the input of victims and victim advocacy organizations.

Victims' voices were given the opportunity to be heard, and the legislators listened. They made decisions and cast votes with input from victims playing a role.

So, the passage of Marsy's Law created two parallel paths of justice and protection for victims of crime. The more tangible path is one on which Kentucky crime victims navigate the criminal legal system – a path that is now lined with a clearly defined set of constitutional rights.

The not-yet-as-visible (but very important) path is leading to a cultural shift within virtually every sector of criminal system response. Police officers, prosecutors, judges, social workers, health care workers, and advocacy organizations are working together – talking to one another – about protecting the rights of victims. And in Frankfort, as legislators consider laws that affect victims of crime, they reach out to victims for input.

These conversations – both in Kentucky's courthouses and at the State Capitol – are, as they should be. And they have always been the intent of Marsy's Law.

So, on this National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we express our unyielding support for victims of crime, and our unending gratitude for those who support and advocate for victims. And we express our deep appreciation to lawmakers

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ers for making sure victims' voices had a seat at the table during these important conversations that impact victims of crime. We are hopeful that victims will continue to gain more seats at the table – not just this week, but every week.



Dr. Emily Bonistall Postel, State Director of Marsy's Law for Kentucky, is an educator and activist with nearly two decades of experience teaching, researching, and advocating on behalf of crime victims.

She led the 2020 effort to secure constitutionally-protected rights for crime victims in Kentucky.

She presents workshops and trainings across the country and works with organizations to develop and implement victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches. She can be reached at ebonistall@marsylaw.us



Paula Kahan, a born and raised Kentuckian, is the staff attorney at the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs where she leads legislative advocacy and provides training on topics related to sexual assault and abuse.

Both professional expertise and personal experience drive her passion to reduce the number of people who are harmed by others.



Alex Otte, a Kentucky native, is the National President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a survivor and an advocate for victims of crime.

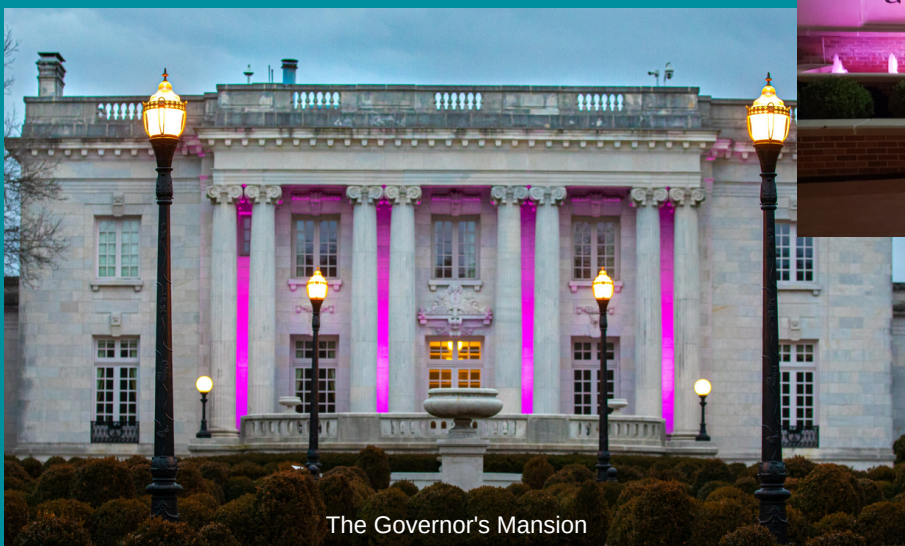
To read the Kentucky Supreme Court ruling in its entirety, click [here](#).

More coverage related to the KY Supreme Court Opinion:

[Lexington Herald Leader](#)
[Northern Kentucky Tribune](#)



GOING PURPLE FOR NCVRW



The Governor's Mansion



These candles are handmade by domestic violence survivors at Greenhouse 17 - support them by placing an [order here](#).

Marsy's Story



Marsy Nicholas was a beautiful, vibrant University of California Santa Barbara student who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend. Only one week after her death, Marsy's mother walked into a grocery store where she was confronted by the accused murderer. The family, who had just come from a visit to Marsy's grave, was unaware that the accused had been released on bail. In an effort to honor his sister, Dr. Henry T. Nicholas III has made it his life's mission to give victims and their families enforceable, constitutional protections and equal rights.

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