



# Annual Report

October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005

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## The Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council

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## The Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council

### Greetings from the Chair

By Glen Mitchell, Chair

Greetings,

As I begin my final year as Chair, my thoughts reflect back over the previous year with a great sense of pride. I continue to feel privileged and proud to be associated with the broad array of dedicated colleagues, serving on the Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council. As we continued through another year of transition and change, the Council's focus never wavered from the course of improving services to crime victims

throughout our community.

Early in the year, **Dr. Delphia Williams**, Director of Community Services, City of Jacksonville, directed the selection process for a new VAAC Coordinator and Chief of Victim Services. In January, we welcomed **Dr. Shannon H. Perry** to our team, as the newly appointed professional for those positions.

Our traditional annual events, commemorating **Victims Rights Week**,

chaired by **Loretta Brienza**, and the **Community Forum**, led by **Jim Kowalski** and **Rich Komando**, continued to meet the exceptional standards that have been established by VAAC. In addition, our **Council Retreat**, "Building Bridges to Collaboration," co-chaired by **Julisa Delamar** and **Neil Ambrus**, proved to be an outstanding highlight among the year's activities. Facilitated by **Tina Jaeckle**, the retreat served as a springboard

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### A Word from Mayor John Peyton



Dear Friends:

On behalf of the people of the great City of Jacksonville, I'd like to recognize the members of the Victim Assistance Advisory Council (VAAC). Year after year,

the VAAC tirelessly promotes victim assistance programs and activities for our citizens.

In a perfect world, our neighborhoods and communities would be free from crime. However, that is not something on which we can depend. What we can do is work to reduce crime and promote awareness, education and services for victims and survivors of crime. In doing so, we are creating a lifeline for Jacksonville's victims and giving them the ability to move forward with their lives. I commend

the VAAC's efforts in this regard, and on making a positive impact on the lives of so many in our city in their time of need. Again, I thank the members of the VAAC for the important work they do on behalf of our city's victims and survivors of crime. Each of you are providing a great service to our city

Warm regards,

John Peyton,  
Mayor

# High Tech Crimes May Require Low Tech Responses

By James A. Kowalski, Jr., Chair Community Relations Committee

EVERYONE WELCOME

The Mayor's Victim Assistance  
Advisory Council  
presents

## Crimes of the 21st Century

Identity Theft, Predatory Lending, Cyberfraud and Other  
Emerging Issues for Victims and Their Advocates



DATE: September 16, 2005  
TIME: (Registration 8 a.m.) 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
PLACE: University Center, University of North Florida,  
12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224  
REGISTRATION FEE: \$5.00 (Scholarships available. Free to  
students with valid ID)

Co-Sponsored by the University of North Florida, Center for  
Community Initiatives and the Department of Criminology and  
Criminal Justice

**BUYER BEWARE  
CONSUMER ALERTS**

According to the United States Office of Consumer  
Affairs, fraud costs consumers \$100 billion every year.

Contact: Dawn Brinkley, VAAC support,  
Victim Services Division at (904) 279-  
4400 or e-mail: [DBrinkley@unf.edu](mailto:DBrinkley@unf.edu)  
Site Manager, VAAC Chair at (904) 962-  
4400 or e-mail: [Jim\\_Mitchell@unf.edu](mailto:Jim_Mitchell@unf.edu)



Crimes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
were the theme of the 2005  
Fall Forum.

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*The best advice  
provided to the  
community was "If it  
seems too good to be  
true, then it probably is."*

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The VAAC Community Relations Committee is traditionally responsible for presenting the VAAC "Fall Forum," and every year, the VAAC council members take a critical look at our community's needs in providing resources and information to current and potential victims in developing the agenda for the Forum.

We strive to be ahead of the perpetrators and determine which areas of crime may pose problems for victims in the future.

On September 16, 2005, VAAC sponsored the 2005 Fall Forum titled, "Crimes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Identity Theft, Predatory Lending, Cyberfraud and Other Emerging Issues for Victims and Their Advocates."

This well-attended event was conducted in partnership with the University of North Florida.

The morning session was led by Special Agent In Charge, Cary Rosoff, of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Rosoff outlined identity theft, internet scams and other technology-related crimes that are on the rise due to our increasing use of technology in every-day situations, and provided both cautionary measures and resources available to law enforcement and victims.

The afternoon sessions were co-presented by Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor, Luis Bustamante, of the Florida Office of Statewide Prosecution, (a department of the Office of the Attorney General, State of Florida) Lynn Drysdale (Jacksonville Area Legal Aid – Predatory Lending Unit) and Cecelia Jefferson, Chief of the City of Jacksonville's Consumer

Affairs Division. Bustamante built on issues introduced by Rosoff, and explored local and statewide prosecution efforts directed at cyberfraud; Jefferson and Drysdale provided information relating to other scams, including payday loans, car dealer fraud, and examples of predatory lending behavior.

The Forum closed with a question-and-answer session.

With multiple efforts on the local and statewide level to close loopholes relied upon by cyber-crooks, some of the best advice provided to our community included reminders to the audience in ways to avoid becoming a victim: "If it seems too good to be true, then it probably is."

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## Retreat revives enthusiasm

By Neil Ambrus, Vice-Chair, Retreat Committee Chair



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*"Soon, the room was filled with lions, koala bears, wolves and other wild animals."*

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Members of the Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council (VAAC) met at the Trout River Lodge inside the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens for the annual spring retreat on March 4, 2005. The retreat was planned by VAAC members Julisa Delamar and Neil Ambrus and facilitated by Tina Jaeckle. Jaeckle has a MSW, a MS in Criminal Justice and many years of experience assisting organizations to improve communication and manage conflict.

She is currently

working on her doctorate from Nova Southeastern University. The theme of the retreat was "Building Bridges to Collaboration." This theme came about by concerns that while members are very committed to improving the lives of crime victims in the Jacksonville community, collaborative action can be hindered by lack of information, personal and group commitment, trust, and personal relationships. It is also hindered by gulfs in profession (lawyer, social worker, priest, etc.) and

work level (CEO, advocate, manager, etc.).

The retreat attempted to break down these barriers by providing a nice place for participants to relax, get to know one another better and to engage participants in group activities designed to develop better team work.

The day started with lunch on the porch. This was followed by a group session, where everyone introduced themselves

# Informing the public of crime victim's rights

By Ann Dugger, Chair Community Awareness Committee

The mission of the Community Awareness Committee is to develop and initiate publicity, advertising and marketing strategies. To reach this goal, the committee has worked very diligently to accomplish the following:

In 2005, for the first time, we held a press conference at the beginning of National Victims Rights Week, April 10-16, to promote events taking place in Jacksonville. This year's theme was *Justice Isn't Served until Crime Victims Are*. VAAC members, along with Sheriff John Rutherford and other dignitaries representing the City of Jacksonville, were present.

Additional press releases were sent out on each event during the week including: Compassionate Families sponsored a candlelight

vigil Tuesday night to honor survivors of homicides; the annual Victims' Rights luncheon Thursday highlighted innocent victims of violent crimes; and a STOP campaign by Men against Violence against Women, MAVAW, again brought the community's attention to the problem of domestic violence.

National Victims Rights Week was promoted in the *Victims' Advocate*, which reaches 35,000 readers, and featured a front-page story by the VAAC Chairman, Glen Mitchell. We promoted the fall forum by sending out press releases and distributing flyers. The Community Awareness Committee drafted a revision of the VAAC brochure; the revised edition has been printed and is available for distribution.

VAAC presented awards to the following: The Jacksonville Children's Crisis Center received the Frank G. Carrington Champion for Victims Award; The First Coast News, received the Media Award; Detective Hal Lloyd, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, received the Law Enforcement Victim Advocate Award; 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge David Gooding, received the Judicial Advocate Award; Child Victim Rapid Response Team Member Pamela Bennett, received the Outstanding Victim Advocate Award.

The Courageous Victim Award went to Sadie Roberts and great-granddaughters Brittany, Kymberly, Khristyne and Kathlene; Shawna Floyd; Mary McCauley and Donna, Dick and Matt Blakely.



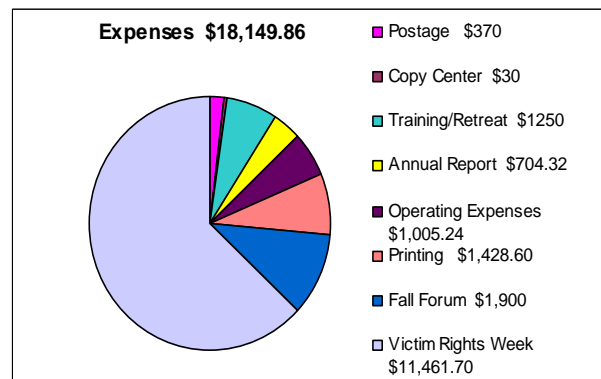
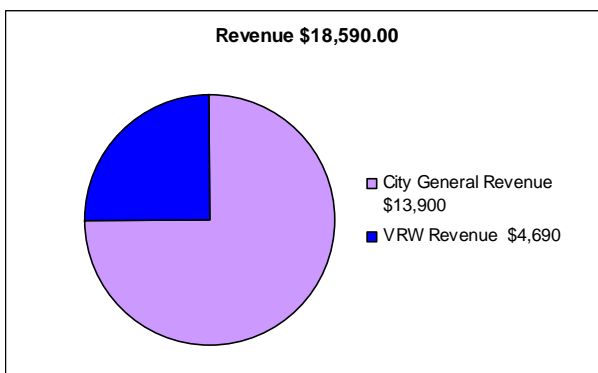
VAAC receives the 2005 Victims' Rights Week Proclamation.

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*"The theme 'Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are' commemorates the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week."*

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## Budget Report



## The Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council

Glen Mitchell, Chair  
Dr. Shannon H. Perry  
Neil Ambrus  
Charles D. Brazil  
Loretta Brienza  
Julisa Delamar  
Ann Dugger  
Michael Edwards  
Judge Gary Flower  
Ralph N. Henderson  
Jay C. Howell, Esq.  
Richard Komando, Esq.  
James A. Kowalski, Jr., Esq.  
Donald F. LeClerc  
Debra Lewis  
Kathy Pannell  
Eric B. Smith, Esq.  
Valerie A. Stanley  
Libby Senterfitt, Esq.  
Amy Sulzmann  
Reverend Roger Williams  
Councilwoman Glorious Johnson



We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.coj.net](http://www.coj.net)

## Enthusiasm

Continued from page 2

And Jaekle discussed the agenda and ground rules. She had the participants do an icebreaker where you were asked to name the animal you felt like, starting with a letter given to you. Soon, the room was filled with lions, koala bears, wolves and other wild animals. After a short break, the members got to work, reviewing the VAAC's mission and bylaws and then creating a vision for the future. Then participants were asked to meet in the five major committees and develop mission, goals and objectives. Out of these work sessions came some major new initiatives for the VAAC for 2005-2006.

# New laws: Looting and offender contact with children

By Jay C. Howell, Co-Chair Legislative Committee

Dozens of communities in Florida experienced problems with looting, burglary, or theft in the aftermath of the four hurricanes that struck our state in 2004. As a result, the recently concluded 2005 legislative session contained a change in the Florida laws relating to crimes committed during a state of emergency.

If a state of emergency has been declared by the governor, these crimes will be elevated one level in terms of potential punishment. For example, if the stolen property is valued between \$300 and \$5,000, it is normally a felony of the third degree, punishable by up to five years in prison. If a state of emergency exists, the same crime could be punishable by as much as 15 years in the Florida State Prison.

A section of the new law mandates that any person arrested for committing any of the specified burglary offenses during a state of emergency, may not be released on bail before the arrested individual appears before a judge. Current Florida criminal statutes

already provide that if the property stolen is emergency medical equipment valued at \$300 or more, and taken from a hospital facility, aircraft, or vehicle, the crime is a second degree felony, punishable by up to 15 years. This new law takes effect July 1, 2005, and is identified as House Bill 207.

The legislative session also went beyond the new laws dictated by the Jessica Lunsford Act in dealing with sexual offenders. A traditional issue associated with the release of child molesters concerns the defendant's restrictions on his contact with minor children.

Often this issue arises when the offender, convicted of molesting a non-family member, attempts to have supervised visitation with his own natural or step children. In our local courts, sentences for convicted child molesters contain provisions which generally prohibit contact with minors.

The new mandates add protections for children. If a sexual offender is placed on any kind of probation, conditional release, or

community control, and the offender's original victim was under the age of 18, the offender may only have supervised contact with a minor child if it is approved by the Parole Commission or the sentencing court, **and** is recommended by a qualified practitioner who has performed a risk assessment and issued a written report based upon a lengthy list of criteria. Typically, this will be a mental health professional who is experienced in treating sexual offenders.

Another requirement of the new law is that the supervised contact may **not** take place unless a child's parent or legal guardian has agreed in writing to the visit and has reviewed a safety plan detailing the acceptable conditions of contact during the visit.

This new law also prohibits the offender from accessing or using the internet until the qualified practitioner approves a safety plan for the offender's use of the internet or similar services. This new law takes effect January 1, 2006, and is Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1354.

## Chair's letter

Continued from page 1

of new and renewed enthusiasm, stemming originally from the community forum of 2003. Special thanks go out to Neil Ambrus, Vice Chair, and **Valerie Stanley**, Secretary, along with Committee Chairs, **Don LeClerc** and **Jay Howell**, Legislative; **Ann Dugger**, Community Awareness; **Julisa Delamar**, Community Relations; and **Charles Brazil**, Membership. While all the chairs played key roles in the successes of the past year, it took the dedicated work of the entire

Council, along with Community Volunteers, and **Gwen Rhodes**, VSD Support Staff to make it happen.

We also bid a fond farewell at the end of the year to Don LeClerc, who "retired" after 15 years of service to VAAC. On behalf of VAAC and the many members of the Council over those years, I extend a special note of appreciation to him for his dedication and extraordinary service to the crime victim community.