

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Johnson County Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victims of Crime Act National Crime Victims' Rights Week to Honor Landmark Legislation**

In Johnson County, April 26<sup>th</sup> marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Right's Week, a time to focus on victims of crime and celebrate our nation's progress in serving them. This year's theme, "**25 Years of Rebuilding Lives: Celebrating the Victims of Crime Act,**" honors a landmark national commitment to victims of crime.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be held April 26<sup>th</sup>-May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. These events include public rallies, candlelight vigils, and other activities held across the nation, honoring victims, their families, and those who serve them. Recognized annually in April, National Crime Victims' Right's Week is designed to call attention to the life-changing impact crime has on victims and their loved ones, to highlight services available to assist crime victims and to reinforce the message that victims' voices need to be heard throughout the criminal justice system.

Johnson County District Attorney's Office will host an Art Exhibit at the Johnson County Central Library, 9785 W 87<sup>th</sup> Street, Overland Park, displaying through art the impact of past victims through the month of April. A reception will be held April 2, 2009, from 4-6pm. District Attorney Steve Howe and SafeHome Executive Director, Sharon Katz will speak regarding victims of crime.

Before 1984, victims of crime received little public support, there were no "victim" rights. That changed in part when President Ronald W. Reagan proclaimed the first National Crime Victims' Right's Week in 1981 and created a President's Task Force on Victims of Crime. Through the work of the Task Force and subsequent legislative and funding initiatives passed through Congress, a strong national foundation of victim services developed. Kansas passed a Victim Bill of Rights in order to ensure the fair and compassionate treatment of victims of crime and to increase the effectiveness of the criminal justice system by affording victims of crime certain basic rights and considerations.

Additionally, community and justice-system based programs have grown to serve as a comprehensive and coordinated support system for victims. Together, we strive every day to remember the victims that so many others have forgotten.

For more information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week and opening ceremonies in Johnson County, please contact the Johnson County District Attorney's Office at 913-715-3094 or visit the Johnson County District Attorney's website at <http://da.jocogov.org>

For more information about National Crime Victims' Right's Week, visit the Web site of the Office for Victims of Crime, a component of the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice, at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ncvrw>