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## Telling Victims of Inmates' Release

Grant Allows Expansion of Notification System to All Jails

By Tom Jackman  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
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Mallori Scott will be signing up for a program for crime victims whose expansion was announced this week by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine (D).

In November, she and her boyfriend, John M. Shirley, returned home to her Fair Lakes apartment to find her ex-boyfriend, Anthony Lee Burdis, waiting with a gun and a knife. Burdis pistol-whipped them, then stabbed and shot them. Scott survived, but Shirley was killed.

Burdis pleaded guilty to first-degree murder in June, but Scott will always fear him. That's where Victim Information and Notification Everyday, or VINE, comes in. It is designed to notify Scott automatically if Burdis moves from one prison to another, escapes or is released.

"This crime just didn't happen to me," Scott said. "It happened to my son, my family, my loved ones. They look to me as the point person for what's going on. I have to give them information." Scott said she felt reasonably sure that Burdis would not be released anytime soon, but "I'm also reasonably sure when he gets out, he will try to kill me again. I need to make sure that doesn't happen."

At a news conference Monday in Fairfax, Kaine announced that the state would use a \$1.25 million federal grant to expand the VINE system to all 73 county and regional jails. The system tracks offenders from the time they are booked. It places the information on the Internet and can make automated phone calls to crime victims.

"I feel very strongly about this," Kaine said.

He said that when he was mayor of Richmond, he "went to too many funerals and too many victims support meetings. . . . What today represents is that desire we all have to lighten the burden on those who have become victims of crime."

VINE was created by Appriss Inc. of Louisville after a woman there was stabbed to death by a man who had just been released from jail, Appriss spokesman Rick Jones said. The system can be used by anyone, not just crime victims, but participants must register, a process that can be done through the VINE Web site, <http://www.vinelink.com>, or by phone at 800-467-4943. Every user receives a personal identification number as a means of ensuring that the correct person receives a notification, and the system makes repeated calls until a notice is received, Jones said.

Virginia has been using VINE in its state prison system since 2000, Kaine said. "Some pretty amazing things have happened since 2000," the governor said.

He said 24,000 Virginians had registered to receive automatic reports, nearly 1 million people had called the number or visited the Web site, and VINE had called or sent e-mails 720,000 times on the status of state inmates.

But, Kaine said, "it hasn't done all it can do, because not every offender is in our state system." Adding local jail populations to VINE, which will happen over the next 2 1/2 years, means "every offender will be

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tracked," and the system will add information every 15 minutes.

"This is a very practical tool to ensure the victim's right to notification will be enforced," said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the Washington-based National Center for Victims of Crime.

She noted that "one of the most important needs a victim has is the need for information. It's the old saying, 'Knowledge is power.' It has a psychological benefit, and it lets them participate in the process and do effective safety planning."

Loudoun County sheriff's spokesman Kraig Troxell said the program would be a great tool for crime victims. Loudoun does not have a notification system available to victims.

State Sen. Janet D. Howell (D-Fairfax) and John Jones, executive director of the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, helped push to get the funding, which came from a grant from the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Howell, who attended Monday's news conference, said that she had pursued legislation on victims' rights since 1993 but that implementing protections for victims was ineffective and too costly.

Del. Stephen C. Shannon (D-Fairfax), who also attended, said, "The program is an excellent example of federal, state and local government cooperating in the interests of protecting victims of crime in Virginia."

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