

## 2010 COMMISSIONER'S AWARD



### Office of Victim Services (OVS)

*Kristin Smith, Tammy Lou Johnson, Alexis Williams*

In 2010 the Department of Corrections' Office of Victim Services (OVS) launched a program called "Project Safety," that was designed to familiarize more people in the community with our agency's victim notification services and the project has been a huge success. The project began as a mechanism to promote the newer automated notification services, VINE Protective Order and VINE Courts, but it has also been extremely successful at making all who attend more familiar with the Department itself, thanks to the incorporation of a "DOC 101" segment.

OVS has trained staff overseeing the victim-notification services: VINE, which gives callers the status or location of their offender, VINE Courts, a service that provides information on upcoming court cases involving their offenders, and the newest one, VINE Protective Order, or VPO. This vital service calls the registered victim when their protective order has been served, the most dangerous time for the petitioning victim. All these services are designed to help protect victims of crime and are essential to public safety.

The Project Safety initiative, a partnership with the Mary Byron Project and Appriss, Inc., provides a full day of free training on topics that include domestic violence and all of the VINE services. During the first six months of the Project Safety initiative, over 300 professionals across the Commonwealth have attended. The attendees include staff from Drug Courts, Police and Sheriff Departments, Regional Comprehensive Care Centers, Rape and Domestic Violence Shelters, Commonwealth and County Attorneys along with their Victim Advocates, Circuit Court Clerks and their Deputies, and our own DOC employees.

As a result of these trainings, in the first six months of 2010, as compared to the first six months of 2009, VINE Protective Order notifications have seen over a 100% increase and there has been an increase in the other VINE notifications as well.

As part of their regular duties, OVS victim advocates and the program administrator talk to hundreds of victims each week, they give public awareness presentations and they visit county jails to ensure staff are familiar with the VINE system. This part of their work is especially important because it is only through continued diligence that we prevent another tragedy like the one that prompted the creation of the VINE system.

Kentucky has a history of "firsts" when it comes to protecting victims: we were first to provide an automated, statewide victim notification system; first to mandate such a system by statute; and first to implement the statewide protective order notification system. We're proud of these facts and our commitment to public safety.

We're now very proud our public safety efforts continue with initiatives like "Project Safety."