SANTA CLARA COUNTY

2015 UNSUNG HERO AWARDS

Presented by:

VICTIM SUPPORT NETWORK

APRIL 23, 2015

CAMPBELL COMMUNITY CENTER
ORCHARD CITY BANQUET HALL
A Celebration honoring Survivors of Crime & Crime Victim Advocates

This event recognizes the “unsung heroes” who, through their direct and indirect efforts, have provided assistance and support to victims of crime in Santa Clara County. The Victim Support Network holds this victim advocate recognition event and awards ceremony on an annual basis in conjunction with National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.

The Victim Support Network for Santa Clara County is an association of victim service professionals who strive to enhance the quality and quantity of services for crime victims in Santa Clara County. The Victim Support Network provides support referral and education, as well as advocacy for improvements in the area of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Presented by:
VICTIM SUPPORT NETWORK
2015 UNSUNG HERO AWARDS

Program

Buffet Luncheon

Introduction
Captain Les Bishop,
Commander of the San Jose California Highway Patrol

The National Anthem
Officer Mark Doyle
Milpitas Police Department

Welcome Remarks
Laura Garnette,
Chief of the Probation Department, Santa Clara County

Keynote Speaker
Jeff Rosen,
District Attorney, Santa Clara County

Singer
Deborah Thompson
“Special Tribute to All Victims”

Victim Impact Speaker
Robin Rivera

Presentation of Unsung Hero Awards

Closing Remarks
Captain Les Bishop

Photographer
Beth Edmonds
Asian Americans for Community Involvement
*Michele Lew, President & CEO*

AACI is the largest nonprofit organization focused on Asians in Santa Clara County. Our mission is to improve the health, mental health and well-being of individuals, families and the Asian community.

Community Solutions
*Erin O'Brien, President & CEO*

Community Solutions is a comprehensive non-profit human services agency serving South Santa Clara County and the surrounding areas of South San Jose and San Benito County since 1972, we serve thousands of individuals every year.

Mothers Against Murder (MAM)
*Margaret Petros, Executive Director*

MAM strives to reduce the pain and suffering of the murder victims' family by providing immediate compassionate support and advice with financial resources, press relations and guidance through the justice system process. We are proactive advocates!

Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office
*Jeff Rosen, District Attorney*

The District Attorney's Office has specialized units to enhance services to victims of crime, including Homicide, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Robbery, Consumer Protection, and Elder Abuse.

Santa Clara County Police Chief’s Association
*Sheriff Laurie Smith, COP President*

The Santa Clara County Police Chief’s Association is made up of the 13 law enforcement agencies in Santa Clara County, including the individual city police departments, the California Highway Patrol, the District Attorney’s Office, San Jose State University Police department and the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office.

Santa Clara County Probation Department - Victim Services
*Laura Garnette, Chief Probation Officer*

The Victim Services Unit is a specialized unit within the Juvenile Division of the Probation Department. Victim Services offer support and services to crime victims, youth, Probation staff and other professionals in the justice system.

The adult division equally has a strong commitment to victims of crime. Supporting these individuals as each navigates through the criminal justice system while aiding in restitution collection efforts, is at the heart of Probation’s adult division mission.
Santa Clara County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)
*Linda Richards, Director*

SART Provides emergent, comprehensive medical /forensic victim examinations and expert witness testimony following allegations of adult sexual assault.

Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office
*Sheriff Laurie Smith*

The Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office is dedicated to the preservation of public safety by providing innovative and progressive service in partnership with the community. It serves the communities of Cupertino, Los Altos Hills, Saratoga & unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

Silicon Valley FACES—Victim Witness Assistance Program
*Patricia Mitchell, Executive Director*

The FACES- Victim Witness Assistance Program, in partnership with the DA’s office, provides direct services to victims of violent crime. Services include emotional support & crisis intervention, court accompaniment, resource & referral assistance, restitution services, & CA Victim Compensation application assistance.

South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking
*Coalition Executive Committee*

The SBCTEHT was established in 2005 and is comprised of nonprofit organizations, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, faith based organizations and individuals working in partnership to provide comprehensive support for survivors.

U.S. DOJ, U.S. Attorney’s Office—Victim Witness Unit
*Maureen French, Victim Witness Coordinator*

The Victim Witness Unit provides victims of federal crimes with direct services including referrals, notifications of court events, court accompaniment and other assistance during the federal judicial process. The unit also assists fact witnesses.

YWCA Silicon Valley—San Jose
*Adriana Caldera, Director—Domestic Violence Department*
*Sue Barnes, Director—Rape Crisis Department*

To empower our diverse community to live free of domestic violence through the provision of safety, support services and self-empowerment, the YWCA Domestic Violence Dept. offers a range of free/low-cost confidential services in English & Spanish.

The Rape Crisis team supports sexual assault survivors and their loved ones with legal and medical advocacy, counseling, and a 24-hour confidential line: 408-287-3000. In addition, we provide outreach education and training to the community.
Asian Americans for Community Involvement  
Cindy Luu

Cindy Luu is a Legal Advocate at Asian Women’s Home, the domestic violence program of Asian Americans for Community Involvement. Over the last nine years, Cindy has helped hundreds of women, children, and men achieve a new life free from fear of abuse. She primarily works with immigrant Vietnamese survivors, who face immense challenges navigating the American legal system. Cindy is very humble, but her skill as an advocate is undeniable. She goes above and beyond to ensure her clients’ needs are being met, and she does everything with deep empathy and unshakable patience. Her generous spirit also extends beyond her day job. Her colleagues have enjoyed many delicious meals thanks to Cindy, and she regularly volunteers at her local temple. In her own words, she uses the painful experiences of those she helps as her strength to push for both legal and educational change in society.

Community Solutions
Detective Mindy Zen, Morgan Hill Police Department

Detective Zen has been a law enforcement officer for almost 20 years. In her current role as Domestic Violence Detective for the Morgan Hill Police Department, Detective Zen has proved to be a tenacious, compassionate, and committed advocate for survivors of intimate partner abuse. Many survivors are apprehensive about speaking with law enforcement. However, Detective Zen is able to quickly establish rapport and trust due to her victim-centered, non-judgmental, and empowering approach. Detective Zen goes above and beyond to help survivors; regardless of what jurisdiction the abuse occurred in. She is efficient and truly understands the urgency and potential dangers involved in domestic violence cases. Furthermore, Detective Zen’s spirit of collaboration is invaluable in creating and maintaining strategic alliances amongst governmental and community based organizations.

Detective Zen’s dedication and professionalism were instrumental in the launch of the South County Family Justice Center and its ongoing operations. Detective Zen is an indispensable member of the South County Domestic Violence Response Team. She has conceptualized and executed several trainings for service providers in South County. Prior to her current assignment, Detective Zen worked as a Street Crimes Detective and School Resource Officer. Detective Zen is truly an amazing Unsung Hero.
Mothers Against Murder (MAM)
Paul J. Bains

Pastor Paul J. Bains is the Founder & Director of the Peninsula Chaplaincy Network, a program under the non-profit organization Project WeHOPE. Pastor Bains has been a Senior Police Chaplain for 10 years and has served the Peninsula, including as a sworn Chaplin for the Palo Alto and East Palo Alto Police Departments. Pastor Bains’ work in our community is invaluable, a demanding position as his service is requested at all hours of the night. Mothers Against Murder has witnessed the compassionate and genuine work of Pastor Bains who comes in contact with families of murder victims immediately after the incident and during some serious crisis conditions. Pastor Bains is natural at his ability to touch families during the most painful time, after losing a loved one to a senseless criminal act. Pastor Bains is MAM’s Unsung Hero for his amazing work with families, his care and active involvement on many local boards, commissions and community projects such as his leadership with opening the first and only Warm Shelter for the homeless established in East Palo Alto. Pastor Bains cares and that makes a difference in how families of murder victims are treated and to ultimately help them find justice and peace.

Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office
Carolyn Powell

In 2014, Carolyn Powell convicted Leticia Cerda of first degree murder in the suffocation death of her 9-month-old son, German Hipatl, and successfully refuted an insanity defense. The defendant murdered her son by placing a bag over his head. She claimed she intended to kill herself and could not leave her son alone. After killing her son, the defendant went to a highway overpass and paced for several hours until someone called the police. Only then did she claim she was going to jump off the overpass, but made no actual attempts to end her life. Deputy District Attorney Powell worked incredibly hard, dealing with challenging legal issues, mental health experts and defense counsel. Her tireless preparation and determination convinced the jury that the defendant had coldly planned and executed the murder of her child in an attempt to get back at the child’s father for not paying her enough attention. In doing so, Ms. Powell overcame a strong societal bias that “no jury will ever convict a mother of murdering her child, and if they do, they will find her insane.” By obtaining full justice for German Hipatl, Ms. Powell is truly an Unsung Hero.
Santa Clara County Police Chief’s Association
Santa Clara Police Chief Mike Sellers

Chief Mike Sellers has spent his entire law enforcement career with the Santa Clara Police Department. Beginning as a Cadet in 1978, he went on to become a SCPD Reserve Police Officer in 1982, and was hired as a Police Officer in 1985.

Mike has worked a wide variety of assignments including undercover narcotics, SWAT, the Santa Clara County Sexual Assault Felon Enforcement (SAFE) task force, Field Training Officer, and was a charter member of our Special Enforcement Team. He was promoted to Sergeant in 1997. As a Sergeant, he supervised a patrol team, was a member of our Special Response Team, and worked undercover narcotics in our Specialized Crimes Action Team (SCAT).

In 2004, Mike was promoted to Lieutenant and was assigned to the Field Operations Division as a watch commander, Special Operations, and to the Administrative Services Division. He was the Reserve Officer coordinator, Special Events coordinator, Public Information Officer, and assisted with the Citizens’ Police Academy.

In 2008, Mike was promoted to Captain and took command of the Field Operations Division, an assignment that he enjoyed very much. In July, 2010, he was transferred to the Administrative Services Division, and in January of 2012, Mike was promoted to Assistant Chief.

In November, 2012, Mike was elected by the citizens of the City of Santa Clara as the Police Chief and was sworn in on December 18, 2012.

Mike is a graduate of SCULB and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Occupational Studies. Mike is also a graduate of POST Sherman Block Supervisory Leadership Institute and the FBI National Academy.
Santa Clara County Probation Department—Victim Services
Suzette Sanchez & Irma Lara

As the Victim Services Probation Community Workers, Suzette Sanchez and Irma Lara provide a tremendous amount of support to victims, staff and youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Together, they provide direct services to hundreds of victims every year. They not only serve as a liaison between the victims and the Probation Department, they also go above and beyond to provide support in a caring and respectful way. Whether it be accompanying a victim to Court, updating the victim on the juvenile justice processes, creating a welcoming environment for victim impact speakers at the Victim Awareness Workshops for youth, or offering referrals for services, Suzette and Irma do so with empathy and unbridled passion. What is most impressive, is they have never turned a victim away even if it is beyond the purview of the Probation Department services. Suzette and Irma take the initiative to connect the victim to the correct agency or will find the resources the victim is requesting. The Probation Department is thankful for their dedication and sincere desire to support victims as they go through a difficult and long process.

SART - Santa Clara County Sexual Assault Response Team
Dominga Villagomez, RN

Dominga Villagomez has always felt to be a Registered Nurse was her "Dream Come True." She came to the US as an immigrant from Mexico, working in the fields with her family. In the face of a lack of support, she got a job at Valley Medical Center as a Nurses Aid, got the education to become an Licensed Vocational Nurse, and finally, her dream job, a Registered Nurse, working at Valley Medical Center. In addition to her Nursing position in various Departments at VMC, she also volunteered with Kaiser Hospitals and VMC to care for the homeless, and farm workers. She has made 4 trips to foreign countries, including Ghana, Guatemala, and 2 trips to Senegal, at her own expense to work with eye surgeons.

Dominga began work as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner 2008 and since has been a very valuable member of SART. She also volunteers to do SART Exams at the VMC South Valley Clinic in addition to being on call and performing exams at VMC. For her generosity of spirit and commitment to others, Dominga is the SART 2015 Unsung Hero.
South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking

Sharan Dhanoa, Coordinator

Sharan is an attorney, activist, and an indispensable member of the South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking. In her role as Coalition Coordinator, Sharan brings together over 40 governmental, community based, and faith based organizations for the purposes of working in partnership to protect victims, prosecute offenders, and develop prevention campaigns. Sharan’s tenacity and tireless efforts behind the scenes have resulted in an increased awareness of human trafficking, as well as additional resources to combat this epidemic. Furthermore, Sharan has played a crucial role in enhancing the Coalition by bringing in new members, interns, partners, and donors; both locally and throughout the Bay Area. Sharan provides invaluable assistance to all of the Coalition member agencies. She also supervises student and faith based volunteers and coordinates special projects. For example, Sharan spearheaded, organized, and chairs the Super Bowl Work Group which works with victim service providers, attorneys, law enforcement, and human trafficking advocates from all over the Bay Area. In addition to her anti-human trafficking work in the United States, Sharan has also worked globally with Destiny Reflection, a nonprofit that serves young women at risk of sex trafficking in Kolkata, India. Sharan is truly an unsung hero!
Silicon Valley FACES—Victim Witness Assistance Program
Janet Childs

Since 1970, Janet Childs has been providing crisis intervention counseling and education focusing on the dynamics of loss, illness, crisis & grief. As a founding member of the Centre for Living with Dying, Janet has worked with thousands of individuals, groups & professionals. She oversees the educational programs and coordinates the Bay Area Critical Incident Stress Management Team. For the past 30 years, she has provided trainings for social workers, nurses, teachers, therapists, advocates and peace officers. Combining her love of music with her personal & professional experience with loss, she creates a safe & healing environment to examine these difficult issues.

Janet has a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology & English from San Jose State University, and a Master’s degree in Theology. Some of her accomplishments include working with victims of Hurricane Katrina in both Louisiana & Mississippi, establishing Critical Incident Stress Management teams in Sydney, Melbourne, Moscow, Northern Ireland, and in countless locations across the US. She has also assisted survivors & first responders of the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the Oakland Hills Firestorm, and first responders involved in the tragedy of September 11th, 2001.

FACES-Victim Witness Program is proud to honor Janet with the Unsung Hero award for her work with survivors of a homicide. In partnership with Victim Witness, Janet facilitates a yearly Grief and the Holidays workshop for families who lost a loved one due to violent crime. Participants credit part of their healing to Janet’s compassionate nature, therapeutic touch & open heart. Janet is a true unsung hero!
HONOREES

U.S. DOJ, U.S. Attorney’s Office—Victim Witness Unit
Stephen Meyer, Assistant U.S. Attorney

The Victim Witness Unit of the United States Attorney’s Office honors San Jose native, Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Meyer, for his dedication and compassion to crime victims and their families. A graduate from Andrew Hill High School, Stephen earned his Bachelor’s degree from Santa Clara University and his law degree from Brooklyn Law School in New York City. With over eight years of experience as a prosecutor with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Stephen treats each case with care, making sure the victims are informed and understand the criminal justice process. Currently, Stephen specializes in prosecuting gangs and organized crime. His actions demonstrate concern for the well-being of victims who had the misfortune of experiencing a grim reality; violent crimes can happen to innocent people. Most recently, he remained focused and victim centered when prosecuting a murder case involving a devoted family that lost their son to mistaken identity. Stephen’s commitment to victims’ rights was apparent when he hosted several meetings with the family to discuss the possible outcomes of the case. Stephen’s genuine compassion and his passion for making the world a better place is illustrated in all he does. Therefore, we would like to take this moment to recognize Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Meyer as an Unsung Hero.

YWCA Silicon Valley - Domestic Violence Department
Sherril Johnson

Sherril began her work with survivors of domestic violence in 2000 as a volunteer at a shelter providing safety planning, crisis counseling and goal planning. She began her work with Support Network as a therapist trainee in 2009. Throughout her time with us, Sherril has developed innovative groups and workshops focusing on Healthy Relationships with a focus on self care and awareness for survivors of domestic violence here at the YWCA as well as creating presentations on teen dating violence for the Columbia Neighborhood Center and middle school students. She has provided workshops for women involved in prostitution and has a heart for empowering women and children to heal and grow from their experiences of abuse. Sherril has used her knowledge and experience as a published Biologist to focus on interventions and strategies to help those who have experienced trauma to better understand the neurobiology of trauma and how it affects the brain over time and guides clients toward healing and recovery. Sherril exudes compassion and empathy. She works tirelessly as a volunteer providing opportunities for healing through her work with individuals, children, families, groups and school systems. She provides leadership for staff, therapists and other professionals dealing with this issue. Sherril is our Unsung Hero.
YWCA Silicon Valley—Rape Crisis Department
Bree Van Ness

Bree Van Ness joined the YWCA Rape Crisis Department in 2012 as a Jesuit Volunteer; she was subsequently hired as an Assault Prevention/Intervention Specialist. She has been with the Rape Crisis Department for three years and now as our Senior Advocate, she conducts legal advocacy, maintains our relationships with the District Attorney’s office and law enforcement agencies, and provides support to the rest of the team. In addition, she provides crisis counseling to survivors of sexual assault and presents workshops to K-college age students. Bree has previously volunteered at a therapeutic day care for neglected and abused children, where she supported child care workers and acted as a child advocate. She has also worked as an instructional aide with special needs students. As an undergraduate at Seattle University, Bree conducted research in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences while earning her B.A. in Psychology. We are fortunate and honored to have Bree as an integral member of our team as well as a leader in our community.
Let us remember the great call to service Officer Johnson and others in law enforcement have for our community. To protect us from those who disregard the value of each and every one of our lives.

On March 24, 2015, San Jose Police Department lost one of its own. Officer Michael Johnson, 38, was shot and killed while responding to a duty call. Officer Johnson was a 14-year veteran of the San Jose Police Department. He is survived by his wife, Nicole, and parents, Katherine Decker and Daniel Johnson.

Rest In Peace, our hero.

SCC Victim Support Network
THANK YOU

Thank you for attending this celebration honoring survivors of crime and the dedicated professionals who have made a difference in their lives.

Your attendance and support are greatly appreciated.