

CAP TIP #2 **To Improve Public Awareness**

Sponsoring a Student Poster/Essay Contest

Introduction

One of the most creative ways to engage students in National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) activities is to sponsor a contest that allows them to submit posters and essays that reflect the NCVRW theme, and the importance of crime victims' rights and services. By encouraging students' writing and artistic talents, Contest sponsors can educate them about the impact of crime on individuals, schools, communities and our Nation as a whole; and help them understand the importance of the Crime Victims Fund in not *only* holding Federal offenders accountable for their crimes, but also in paying fines and fees that help support services for crime victims.

A student poster/essay contest is also an excellent way to engage schools in observing 2009 NCVRW, and focusing on victimization issues that are specific to America's youth, including school violence, crime and bullying; family violence; sexual assault; and juvenile crime and victimization.

Student Poster and Essay Contest Guidelines

Contest Co-sponsors and Supporters

The Contest can be co-sponsored by your NCVRW Planning Committee, which should include crime victims and survivors; community- and system-based victim assistance professionals; criminal and juvenile justice professionals; and allied professionals (including schools). Contest co-sponsors can provide speakers for classrooms and school assemblies who can address the impact of crime and victimization – including youth-specific topics as described above – and the importance of the Crime Victims Fund in supporting and expanding victim services nationwide.

Key school officials to involve in planning and implementing the Contest include:

- School Board members.
- School principals.
- School teachers.
- Parent-Teacher Association.
- Teen Courts facilitators and participants.
- Any after-school program coordinators.

Permission must be obtained from school officials to sponsor the Contest, and their willingness to officially endorse and “co-sponsor” it lends credence to your efforts. It’s helpful to ask your NCVRW Planning Committee if members have any direct contact with the school officials listed above, as personal contacts can be very helpful in seeking support and co-sponsorship.

Contest Theme

A recommended Contest Theme is “Why It Is Important to Help People Who Have Been Hurt by Crime.”

For younger students who submit entries for the Poster Contest (grades 1 through 5), the theme can be articulated by asking them to consider questions (such as):

- How does it feel when somebody does something that is not nice to you?
- What does it mean to you to be helpful or nice to someone who is hurting?
- What do you think police officers do to help people who get hurt by crime?
- Do you know that there are lots of people whose job is to help people who are hurt by crime?

For older students who submit entries for the Essay Contest (grades 6 through 12), this can include an explanation of how the Crime Victims Fund has helped millions of people who have been victimized. For example:

- In 2006, there were six million violent crimes and 19 million property crimes in our country.
- Many crime victims are affected physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually by crime, and often need help in recovering from its impact.
- A unique aspect of many crime victim services is that they are supported by what’s known as “the Crime Victims Fund.” This Fund comes from fines and fees paid by people convicted of Federal crimes. In other words, convicted offenders are held accountable for their actions, and the money they have to pay helps millions of crime victims in America each year.
- This year is the 25th Anniversary of the Crime Victims Fund, and the 2009 NCVRW Theme is “25 Years of Rebuilding Lives: Celebrating the Victims of Crime Act.”
 - Since the Fund began in 1984, more than \$9 billion has been collected for programs that help crime victims.
 - More than four million crime victims annually receive support and services provided through 4,200 victim assistance agencies.
 - Without the Crime Victims Fund, there would be many victims who don’t receive any help to get better.

Contest Overview

The one-page *Contest Overview* included in this CAP TIP can be adapted to your community, and used to explain the Contest to school officials and parents, as well as students who seek to be contestants.

A sample *Submission Form* is also included in this CAP TIP. It’s helpful to develop a plan that allows essays to be submitted via email to a designated individual; and to

arrange to pick up any posters or essays from the schools that participate in the Contest on April 10th.

Outreach to Schools and Teachers

It is a good idea to develop simple background information about crime and victimization to help students understand and depict the theme of the Contest. For example:

- Obtain and provide students with local statistics about crime and victimization in your community, or use national statistics featured in the *Statistical Overviews* of the NCVRW Resource Guide (including “School Crime and Victimization” and “Teen Victimization”).
- Obtain and provide students with information about school and teen crime and victimization in *your* community, and ask them to consider what they can do to help prevent such crimes, and help people whom they affect.
- Ask representatives of law enforcement, prosecution/courts and victim services to speak to the students about what they specifically do to help victims of crime (in measures that are commensurate with the students’ age and cognitive development).
- For older students who participate in the Essay Contest, provide them with a copy of *VOCA Voices* from the NCVRW Resource Guide, and ask them to reflect on how crime victim services have improved over the past 25 years with support from VOCA.
- If any schools have Teen Court programs, ask their members to use their own experiences as participants to address the Contest theme.

Twelve Tips for Contest Implementation

1. Carefully review the one-page *Contest Overview* and one-page *Contest Submission Form*, and adapt it to your own jurisdiction and Contest.
2. Determine the best contact(s) among school officials who can support the implementation of the Contest. Draft a letter or email that explains NCVRW, the Poster and Essay Contest and its educational value. Attach the one-page *Contest Overview* to provide a summary of the Contest. Secure permission and hopefully their co-sponsorship for the Contest.
3. Post information about the Contest, including the contestant *Submission Form*, on your co-sponsors’ websites, and ask participating schools and their parent/teacher groups to do the same. Identify **one centralized website** that can provide an overview of the Contest and information about how to submit entries.
4. Ask participating schools to e-mail the *Contest Overview* and a link to contest rules and submission requirements to the parents of all students who might be interested in participating.

5. Solicit a panel of judges that includes crime victims and survivors, victim service providers, justice professionals, civic leaders and educators. An excellent panel of judges could include a survivor, your Chief of Police or County Sheriff, your Prosecutor or States' Attorney, a judge, your Mayor or a City Councilmember, a School Board member, and the leader of your Chamber of Commerce.
6. Publicize the contest to local news media, and ask them to help promote the Contest (you can even seek their co-sponsorship for the Contest). If your community has youth-specific media – such as school/student newspapers and/or radio stations, a youth page within the daily newspaper, or radio or television programs geared toward children and teenagers – make sure they are asked to help promote the Contest.
7. Provide a “certificate of participation” to all Contest contestants by adapting the *sample certificate of appreciation* featured in the online artwork at http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2009/camera_ready.html.
8. Since CAP funds cannot be used for cash “prizes,” seek donations from local businesses and merchants for Contest prizes, i.e., merchandise that is age-specific, free fun activities (such as movie tickets, bowling, miniature golf, etc.). Make sure that all contributions for prizes are recognized in media outreach and at the actual prize ceremony.
9. Once winning entries have been selected, invite the students, their families and school officials to attend an awards ceremony (which can be held in conjunction with other NCVRW victim and public awareness events).
10. Prominently display all entries, highlighting the winning entries, at your NCVRW victim awareness and public education events.
11. Remember to follow-up with thank-you letters to anyone who provided support or assistance in implementing the Student Poster/Essay Contest.
12. Brainstorm with your NCVRW Planning Committee about how to use the content of the essays and artwork to promote victim awareness and public outreach throughout the year. For example, artwork can be featured on a calendar or in public education displays; and portions of essays can be used in speeches, brochures and annual reports. See examples on the following pages.

For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at annese@atlantech.net; or by telephone at 202.547.1732.

2009 National Crime Victims' Rights Week



Celebrating the
Victims of Crime Act

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is observed every year in April to promote awareness of the many needs of crime victims, and what individuals, communities, our justice system and helping professionals can do to assist them.

THEME:

"Why It Is Important to Help People Who Have Been Hurt by Crime"

CO-SPONSORED BY: (List co-sponsors)

CONTEST RULES

The Poster Contest is for students in Grades 1 through 5. Posters should be submitted on white paper that is either 8 ½" by 11", or 17" by 22".

The Essay Contest is for students in Grades 6 through 12. Suggested essay lengths are as follows:

Grades 6 and 7	Up to 250 words
Grades 8 and 9	Up to 500 words
Grades 10 through 12	Up to 750 words

Students should write or draw from their own perspectives:

- Why is it important to help people who have been hurt by crime?
- If someone becomes a crime victim, what can be done to help them?
 - How can family and friends help them?
 - What can police and the courts do to help them seek justice?

All students who submit entries will receive a "Certificate of Participation" from the Contest Cosponsors.

(List any additional "prizes" for the winning entries in each category here)

ALL CONTEST SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH, 2009.

Please submit your Contest entries to:

(EITHER A SCHOOL TEACHER/OFFICIAL OR CENTRALIZED LOCATION THAT IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY EMAIL (FOR ESSAY ENTRIES) OR DROP-OFF)



**2009 National Crime Victims' Rights Week
Poster/Essay Contest**

SUBMISSION FORM

Please complete this Form and attach it to your Contest submission:

Student's Full Name:

Student's Age:

Student's Telephone Number:

Student's Grade:

Name of Student's Teacher:

Name of School:

Address of School:

Telephone Number of School:

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