



# Montgomery County Family Justice Center News

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FALL 2009

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **MCFJC Grand Opening**
- **Ambassador Connie Morella Visits FJC**
- **Video Conferencing Coming to the FJC**
- **Lt. Gov Brown & AG Gansler visit FJC**

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## Welcome from Sheriff Raymond M. Kight

I am pleased to welcome you to the first issue of Montgomery County's Family Justice Center Newsletter. The Family Justice Center (FJC) opened its doors officially on May 18, 2009. It was a day for all those involved in its development to share the FJC with public officials and professional partners. More significantly it was a day to celebrate the attainment of a momentous goal- the creation of a one-stop-shop for domestic violence victims and their children in Montgomery County.

I am proud that the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office has played an integral part in the creation of the FJC. Collaboration efforts among the State's Attorney's Office, Montgomery County's Health and Human Services Department, House of Ruth, STTAR Center,

Catholic Charities and the Sheriff's Office has brought critical services together under one roof to ensure domestic violence victims are safe and receive cohesive and



The Montgomery County Family Justice Center is centrally located in the heart of Rockville, MD.

timely assistance.

Special appreciation is extended to Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg for pursuing her vision and making the FJC a reality for the citizens of Montgomery County.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to County Executive Isiah Leggett, County Council President Phil Andrews and State's Attorney John McCarthy for their exceptional support of the project. We are also indebted to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation under the leadership of Resa Levy for its tireless efforts to support the work of the FJC.

Five months have passed since that celebratory event in May and so much progress has been made at the FJC due to our generous community supporters, volunteers and FJC Foundation. This quarterly newsletter will keep you informed and up to date on our growth.

Sincerely,  
Raymond M. Kight, Sheriff

## FJC Grand Opening Event

On May 18, 2009, after two years of extensive strategic planning, Montgomery County commemorated the official opening of the Family Justice Center. The Center, located at 600 Jefferson Street in Rockville Maryland, co-locates numerous County domestic violence services at one convenient site.

Several state and local officials were in attendance at the Grand Opening Ceremonies to celebrate the

local implementation of a nationally and internationally recognized model of service for domestic violence victims. Family Justice Centers have proven their effectiveness through reduction in domestic violence homicides while increasing cooperation with law enforcement, independence and empowerment.

County Executive Leggett said, "Victims of domestic violence deserve a safe haven where (continued on page 6)



(From L-R) Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg, Police Chief Tom Manger, Council President Phil Andrews, Chief Deputy Sheriff Darren Popkin, State's Attorney John McCarthy, Clerk of the Courts Loretta Knight and Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

## Connie Morella Visits the FJC



(From L-R) Jo Ann Ricchiuti, Resa Levy, Karla Smith, Hannah Sassoon, Chief Darren Popkin, Ambassador Connie Morella, County Executive Isiah Leggett, and Loretta Knight.

On July, 28, 2009 Former Congresswoman and Ambassador Connie Morella visited the Family Justice Center with County Executive Isiah Leggett. During her tour of the FJC she met with volunteers and FJC staff, thanking them for their commitment to the important issue of family safety. Resa Levy, FJC Foundation Board President and Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg were

also in attendance.

Ambassador Connie Morella stated, "I am proud of Montgomery County for implementing a recommendation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) by establishing the Family Justice Center. This "one stop shop" assists victims of domestic violence by providing critical services at one safe, non-intimidating, and responsive Center. It will make a difference!"

Since returning from her

ambassadorship in France, she has continued to work on issues of importance to families and to teach at American University. Despite the many demands on her time, she has graciously agreed to become the first member of the Montgomery County's FJC Foundation Advisory Board. Her knowledge on issues of domestic violence and organizational development will serve to further the mission of the FJC.

Choose  
Respect  
Montgomery  
Saturday  
November  
14, 2009  
9:30-3:30

## Choose Respect Montgomery

Parents and teens mark your calendars for Saturday, November 14, 2009! The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and its County partners will be hosting a teen dating conference for teens in grades 7 to 12 and their parents at the Theatre Arts Building of the Rockville Campus of Montgomery College from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. There will be workshops for teens including sessions on healthy teen dating behaviors and recognizing abuse in dating relationships and misuse of

technology. Parents can participate in their own workshop sessions offered in both English and Spanish regarding teen dating behaviors.

City at Peace DC, a youth development organization that uses the performing arts to teach and promote cross-cultural understanding and nonviolent conflict resolution will be featured as the opening performance.

Bill Mitchell, father of a teen dating abuse victim will conduct one of the workshops. Bill is the President

of the Kristin Mitchell Foundation, an organization that supports the educational efforts that raise awareness of unhealthy dating relationships.

Lunch will be offered at no cost to attendees. The conference will conclude with a door prize raffle and the recognition of the Public Service Announcement winners. For more conference information and to register visit [www.chooserespectmontgomery.eventbrite.com](http://www.chooserespectmontgomery.eventbrite.com). For information in Spanish visit [www.eligeel-respectomontgomery.eventbrite.com](http://www.eligeel-respectomontgomery.eventbrite.com).

## Charitable Organizations Support FJC Clients

Cute donated bear from the American Sewing Guild



Women Who Care Ministries (WWCM) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Sewing Guild (ASG) have generously partnered with the Montgomery County FJC to support its mission to create a com-

fortable experience for each and every victim and child who seeks services at the center.

WWCM through their "Loving Kids" Food Program provides a weekly delivery to the FJC of nutritious kid-friendly snacks for the children of parents

receiving FJC services.

The ASG, established to keep the love of home sewing alive and known for their charitable endeavors has donated numerous handmade, child-safe stuffed animals for each young visitor to the FJC.

# Volunteer Spotlight

The success of the Family Justice Center would not be possible without the support and dedication of volunteers. Ellen Belkin graciously offered to spearhead our volunteer program and assists in coordinating volunteer and donor activities for the FJC. Ms. Belkin coordinated the art donor project in which the FJC Foundation was able to collect a wonderful assortment of artwork to decorate the center.

Ms. Belkin has also assisted

with recruitment for the volunteer program. The program started with ten inaugural volunteers who assist at the intake desk, provide translation services and maintain the family area of the FJC. The FJC volunteers are the first contact the clients have when they enter the family area of the FJC. Volunteers create a nurturing and welcoming environment and help ensure that clients and their children are comfortable and receive necessities. Our



(From L-R) Rachel Isaacs, Rachel Goldfarb, Emily Smith, Parisa Tabrizi, Karla Thornton, Ellen Belkin, Mary Paull, Melissa Tozier, and Mary Betters (Not Pictured: Kelly Harper, Jessica Membreno, and Lee Sislen).

volunteers are important to the success of the FJC.

Citizens interested in volunteering at the FJC should contact the Montgomery County Volunteer Center at 240 777-2600 for an application.

## Video Conferencing Coming Soon to the FJC

As a result of an administrative order signed by the Chief Judge of Maryland Robert Bell on September 28, Ex-parte Temporary Protective Orders will soon be heard from the Montgomery County FJC. This will occur through a cutting edge video-conferencing system, allow-

ing victims of domestic violence to obtain these orders from the comfort and safety of the FJC facility. The high definition equipment with pan/tilt/zoom capability is audible to a whisper and will allow the judge in the courtroom and the client at the FJC to communicate easily.

This is possible due to the efforts of Chief Judge Ben Clyburn of the District Court and the Maryland Judiciary who have supported the videoconferencing system which will be a model for the rest of the State.

*“ In addition to easier access to our courts , video conferencing reduces the danger to the victim of encountering the offender at or near the courthouse.”*  
**Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn**

## FJC Bus Ads to be Posted in Ride-on Busses

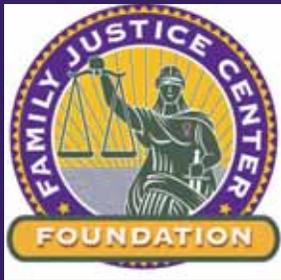
This fall the interiors of 200 Montgomery County Ride-on buses will display vibrant Family Justice Center ads. The bus cards have been printed in both Spanish and English and include a photo of the FJC location, a photo of a mother and young child along with the phrase **“Providing Help for Hurting Families in a Safe and Comfortable Environment: The Montgomery County Family Justice Center”**. The FJC hours of operation,

website address and services available at the center are listed on the bus card.

The project idea originated from the Education and Outreach Committee of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. It is the primary objective of the committee

to provide County residents with information about domestic violence services and programs offered in Montgomery County. The Offices of the Sheriff and State’s Attorney, the Administrative Office of the Circuit Court, the Montgomery County Council, the Departments of Police, Health and Human Services and Correction and Rehabilitation all generously contributed to the printing expense for this project.





# Family Justice Center Foundation News

## FJC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS

- Resa Levy  
President
- Susan Mize  
Vice President
- Donna Rismiller  
Secretary
- Dorothy Fait  
Treasurer
- Marilyn Bagel
- Denise Bayerle
- David Belkin
- David P. Cohen
- Thomas M. DeGonia II
- Catherine Leggett

## Foundation President's Welcome

Three amazing occurrences happened this past year. The Montgomery County Family Justice Center was established, the MCFJC Foundation, a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) non profit organization was formed to help support the mission of the FJC, and the two entities worked together, at a breathless rate of activity, to engage an entire community in the effort to help survivors of domestic violence.

For the Foundation, the early part of last October hung at the very top of this monumental year - like a parachutist paused at the door of the plane, ready to jump. There had been no previous practice runs, no jumps with a net. Things were already in motion, and

the Foundation's survival depended upon our board members, donors, volunteers and the help of the professional staff of the FJC.

One day at a time, things happened. They happened independently, and they happened with the edges of responsibility blurred, yet so fixed was each of our focus, that our singular mission never became disturbed. We knew what we wanted to do – and with the help of our donors and volunteers - we did it!

What a great first year. Thank you!

Resa Levy, President  
MCFJC Foundation

## MCFJC Foundation Launches “Lawyers’ Initiative” Montgomery County attorneys answer the call

MCFJC Foundation board member and attorney Donna Rismiller led the Foundation's “Lawyer's Initiative” with support from fellow board members and attorneys David Belkin, Tom DeGonia and Dodie Fait.

The initiative began last April at Law Day. Board members set up a table, disseminated information about the FJC, and explained the ways in which attorneys could become involved. Subsequently, board members made presentations to various attorney groups within the County to further their understanding of the ways in which they

could help support the FJC.

In response to a direct mail outreach seeking both professional and financial support, the Foundation received a generous outpouring of support from attorneys in the County. In addition to financial support, eleven private attorneys from Montgomery County have offered pro bono services in cases involving both temporary protective orders as well as divorce actions. Attorneys wishing to add their support should do so by contacting the Foundation at [mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com) or Donna Rismiller at 301 340-1616 or by email at [drismiller@rismillerlaw.com](mailto:drismiller@rismillerlaw.com).

## Verizon Wireless Hopeline Gift

### Allows Temporary Protective Orders Heard via Video

A generous gift from the Verizon Wireless Hopeline Foundation to the MCFJC Foundation will help victims of domestic violence who come to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center have safer, easier access to justice. The gift provides funds for video conferencing equipment that will allow victims who file for temporary protec-

tive orders to do so directly from the Family Justice Center and have their requests heard by judges by way of a live video link. Video conferencing will provide temporary protective orders in Montgomery County Courts that are ex-parte—without notice to or presence of the other party.

The value of this gift is beyond measure. Last year

Montgomery County courts granted more than 1,850 protective orders.

According to Chief Deputy Darren Popkin, “Statistics have shown that the most vulnerable time for domestic violence victims is immediately following the issuance of a temporary protective order.”

**Special thanks to the following MCFJC Foundation donors:**

**Founding Angel**  
(\$50,000 & above)  
Verizon Wireless Hopeline Foundation,

**Community Builder**  
(\$10,000 –\$24,999)  
Geico Philanthropic Foundation,  
Kaiser Permanente, & Montgomery Alliance

**Community Partner**  
(\$5,000-\$9,999)  
Women Who Care Ministries.

**Community Advocate**  
(\$1,000-\$4,999)  
June Linowitz, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Sheriff Raymond M. Kight and Suzanne Firstenberg

## Fundraising News

### Thank you! We reached our Goal!

The FJC Foundation launched its development campaign last February with a highly successful event chaired by board member Catherine Leggett and hosted by Carol Trawick at her home in Bethesda. The event marked the official opening of the Foundation’s community awareness and fundraising campaign.

Board members agreed to a first year fundraising goal of \$250,000 in cash and in-kind donations. Outreach efforts resulted in lead gifts from Verizon Wireless, Geico Philanthropic Foundation, Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, Montgomery Alliance and Women Who Care Ministries.

Thanks to the hundreds of donors who gave financial and in-kind support we reached our first year goal!

To support the Foundation, contact [mcjfcfoundation@yahoo.org](mailto:mcjfcfoundation@yahoo.org) or send your tax-deductible gift to MCFJC Foundation, PO Box 10692, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

## Local Artists Provide Beauty and Warmth to the FJC

Outstanding leadership by volunteer Ellen Belkin led to the donation of dozens of pieces of artwork gifted to the FJC Foundation by talented local artists. Coordination of this project was a tremendous undertaking and was the direct result of Ms. Belkin’s efforts.

ArtSeen’s June Linowitz offered significant help with the project. Further, she

commissioned Arts on the Block, a talented group of young local artists working under the guidance of Executive Director Jan Goldstein and lead artist Carien Quiroga, to create a mosaic for the Center. The beautiful piece now hangs in the reception area of the FJC. All artists contributed their work framed and ready-to-hang. Cathy

Busnell Berman’s donations included a beautiful original quilt, aptly named Helping Hands, which she created specifically for the FJC.

A whimsical mural created by artist Beth Simonson spans (**Continued on page 6**)



Mosaic created by young artists from Arts on the Block.

## Lt. Governor Brown and Attorney General Gansler Visit FJC

To commemorate the start of October as Domestic Violence Awareness month, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown and Attorney General Doug Gansler held a press conference at the Montgomery County FJC on September 29. It was an opportunity to announce the new gun laws related to domestic violence scheduled to take effect October 1. "Too many Maryland families know the tragedy of domestic violence and far too many lives have been lost. We know these new laws will save lives, but we also know that they are not a silver bullet. We must continue to work with local leaders, nonprofit groups and other partners to educate more Marylanders about how they can help end domestic vio-

lence," Lt. Governor Brown said.

The new legislation:

- ◆ Authorizes (but does not require) a judge to order the respondent in a temporary protective order to surrender any firearms in the respondent's possession and refrain from possessing any fire-



From L-R: Attorney General Gansler, Lt. Governor Brown, Chief Deputy Sheriff Darren Popkin and State's Attorney John McCarthy.

arm for the duration of the temporary protective order.

- ◆ Requires a judge to order the respondent in a final protective order to surrender any firearms (handguns and long guns) in respondent's possession and refrain from possessing any firearm for the duration of the protective order.

"These new laws provide judges with the necessary tools to take the guns out of the hands of abusers, reducing the risk of death or injury to their victims and to law enforcement," said Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler.

### We're on the Web:

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc) & [www.mcfjcfoundation.org](http://www.mcfjcfoundation.org)

**(Local artists cont.)** an entire wall in the main family area. The charming, colorful design is being re-produced and used as part of a logo design for the FJC.

Thank you to all who helped bring both beauty and warmth to the FJC. You truly make a difference!



Above: The colorful mural painted by artist, Beth Simonson is located in the family area of the FJC.

Right: Helping Hands, hand crafted quilt created by Cathy Busnell-Berman.



**(Grand Opening cont.)** they can receive the services and help they need, and that is what the new Montgomery County Family Justice Center will do." Initial onsite partners working collaboratively at the FJC to meet the needs of domestic violence victims include the Offices of the State's Attorney and Sheriff, Abused Persons Program, the House of Ruth, Catholic Charities and the STTAR Center. Services offered at the FJC include needs assessment, safety planning, legal advocacy, legal representation and counseling for victims and their children.

Other officials in attendance at the Grand Opening and extending significant support for the project were Congressman Chris Van Hollen, County Council President Phil Andrews, Councilmember

Duchy Trachtenberg, State's Attorney John McCarthy and Chief Deputy Darren Popkin. Cheryl Kravitz, co-chair of Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley's Family Violence Council and representatives from Senators Ben Cardin and Barbara Mikulski's Offices were also present.

At the conclusion of the press conference guests were treated to refreshments at the FJC. Tours of the family area, children's playroom and several themed counseling rooms were conducted by FJC staff.

### **FJC Update:**

**Since the Grand Opening over 650 domestic violence clients representing 75 different countries have received services at the FJC.**