



Crime Survivors, Inc.
Crime Survivors Resource Center (CSRC)
Grant Proposal

2008

Organization Background

Mission and History

The mission of Crime Survivors is to increase public awareness of victims' rights and needs and to provide resources, support and information to empower crime victims to survive and thrive. Crime Survivors is committed to serving our community by being an advocate and resource for crime victims and their families.

Patricia Wenskunas founded Crime Survivors in 2003 following an assault and attempted murder that left her physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially devastated. Now, with a 12-member Board of Directors, an honorary Advisory Board and valuable partners (see attached letters of support), Crime Survivors is working toward its mission by:

- Conducting public awareness campaigns in Orange County communities about the needs and rights of victims and the services Crime Survivors offers via different media forums, public speaking with schools and training with local authorities;
- Offering a comprehensive set of products, services, and resources to help victims and their families through the emotional recovery process, as well as reduce financial and physical burdens placed on the victim as a result of the crime; and
- Educating/preparing crime victims for the trial preparation, trial and post trial process.

Vision and Services

As a 501c3 non-profit organization, Crime Survivors' vision is for victims of crime to recover from their experience mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially, by receiving respect, support and protection from law enforcement, the judicial system, and the community. We firmly believe that all victims of crime have the right and responsibility to survive.

Therefore, Crime Survivors' services are designed to provide resources to crime victims in Orange County, California, with the goal to expand into other California counties and eventually across the Southwestern United States. We provide the following products and services to crime victims:

- Victim Emergency Bags containing basic necessities that crime victims may need following a crime
- Access to additional community resources, including financial assistance

- A web site with information and resources to assist the victim through recovery
- Tutorials, workbooks, and CDs that educate and help crime victims become survivors
- Pins, charms, shirts and other symbolic items to improve morale and pride
- Access to other crime victims and Crime Survivors staff to answer questions and provide emotional support
- Improved and safer facilities for victims in government facilities, such as metal detectors and victim waiting rooms at all courthouses in Orange County

The Needs We Address

A common complaint in the U.S. legal system is that alleged criminals have guaranteed rights while victims are unaided. In 1984, California passed a Victims Bill of Rights assuring crime victims certain rights, including the ability to receive compensation for losses due to a crime. However, few victims are aware of this law; unfortunately, the public service sector mandated to protect those rights may not disseminate the information to victims. Therefore, many crime victims suffer extensively without receiving the assistance guaranteed by state law.

Furthermore, the Victims Bill of Rights does not assist in emotional recovery to overcome the trauma created by the crime. While the Victims Bill of Rights mandates education and awareness of victims to its constituents, state judicial and public safety employees, the limited resources and funding make impacting the process difficult. Local hands-on community support is required to ensure public officials are sensitive to the needs and rights of victims, and that victims receive the assistance they need.

Thousands of victims every year suffer from detached law enforcement, lack of attention from the judicial system, and the stress and trauma of the entire ordeal. In Orange County, few victims are aware of the resources and organizations to help crime victims and their families. Crime Survivors is beginning to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive set of programs and resources that help the victim successfully recover from their ordeal.

This Request

Overview

This project includes the acquisition and renovation of the Crime Survivors Resource Center (CSRC), which will provide a 'one-stop' location for victim services. Crime Survivors, as well as partner organizations that provide products and services to prevent and/or reduce crime, will be located within the CSRC.

The CSRC provides a single community location so that crime victims can access all the services and resources they need in one place. Now, the services that are available must be accessed separately; i.e., victims must make multiple calls to multiple organizations and locations, which can be frustrating to recent victims and can discourage them from accessing the help they need to overcome their traumas. The CSRC will provide a location to provide crime victim services that are accessible in a well-coordinated, streamlined manner.

In addition, resident organizations at the CSRC will provide prevention services such as educational and awareness workshops, safety defense classes and similar services to crime victims as well as the general public. These outreach services will serve to deter further victimization and enable everyday citizens to recognize and avoid high-risk situations.

The value-added provided by this project is represented by high-level collaboration between multiple agencies and organizations having similar missions. By working together, Crime Survivors and our partners will develop the CSRC so that crime victims can easily access the help they need to survive and thrive, and so that the public can learn the skills and abilities necessary to avoid becoming victims of crime.

Target Audiences and Location

The primary audience for the CSRC is victims of violent crime. Secondly, the CSRC, through Crime Survivors and its partners, will serve community members with awareness and prevention services. We estimate approximately 1,000-2,000 beneficiaries in the first year, with that number increasing steadily in following years.

The CSRC will be located in Orange County, with geographic reach covering Orange and Los Angeles counties. Eventually we would like to obtain a Resource Center in LA County as well, based on the success of the Orange County model.

Methodology

Crime Survivors will contract with a project manager who will locate and renovate a building that will serve as Crime Survivors' administrative and service provision headquarters, and provide space for partner organizations – such as other NGOs and legal assistance and law enforcement agencies – to establish a presence. The Crime Survivors Resource Center will include the following rooms and resources:

- Staffed lobby
- Library with self-help, empowerment and informational resources
- Computers for research, applications and contact with law enforcement if needed
- Training and meeting rooms for self-defense and safety classes, community gatherings, victim support group meetings, etc.
- Administrative offices
- Confidential counseling rooms

Project Outcomes/Benefits

With the CSRC's primary audience being victims of crime, CSRC users will benefit from having a centralized, one-stop location to access all available victim services. This benefit will be measured by the number of people served by the CSRC, compared with the number of people served by individual agencies before the center.

The CSRC is being developed as an integral part of the community. As such, the entire community will benefit from having a specific location through which to educate and train residents on self-defense and safety skills and abilities, which will help to diminish opportunities

for violent crime. This benefit will be measured by the number of people who participate in these services.

Another significant benefit of the CSRC is the collaboration created between the organizations and agencies that will provide services through the Center. This type of collaboration, while difficult to achieve, will mean a higher level of service and coordination for crime victims and the public. A future outcome of this collaboration may be an integrated information system to allow for even greater service delivery according to individual client needs.

Of course, the benchmark of the CSRC's success will be the degree to which its users feel their needs were met. This benefit will be measured through the use of surveys as a feedback mechanism to improve the Center's resources and services.

Evaluation

The success and impact of the CSRC will be evaluated through the above outcomes, and:

- Success in meeting milestones established by the project manager to obtain, renovate, and open the building for its intended use.
- Number of partner organizations and agencies that commit to providing a presence to crime victims within the CSRC. This measures the perceived value of the center to partner agencies.
- Ability of the CSRC to sustain itself through diverse funding sources.
- Victim success stories will be captured to evaluate the Center's role in assisting victims in their journey to survive and thrive after their ordeals.

Funding Considerations

Crime Survivors is currently seeking \$3 million - \$5 million to secure and renovate space for the CSRC. (See attached project budget.) Ongoing support for the CSRC will be obtained through a diverse range of donations, collaborations and grant sources. We are also exploring the feasibility of including a retail shop in the CSRC, which will provide another source of income. Part of this initial grant will support capacity building for Crime Survivors by adding development experience to staff. In addition to a project manager for the CSRC, this role is crucial to the ongoing success and stability of the Center.

Personnel

As described above, Crime Survivors' founder and President Patricia Wenskunas has first-hand knowledge of the challenges a person faces after being victimized. For over five years, she has been working to build her own knowledge as well as relationships with key partners to provide information and resources to other victims, so that they may recover from their ordeals and regain their physical, emotional, spiritual and even financial health. Now, with a full complement of skills and abilities represented on the Board of Directors, Advisory Board and valuable partners, Crime Survivors is gaining momentum toward its mission and seeking to establish the next step in its journey, the Crime Survivors Resource Center.