

# City commemorates crime victims this week

By CHARLES PAULLIN  
@CPAULLINNBH

NEW BRITAIN — People associated with victims of homicide have certain emotions in common, said John Aberg.

“People say they can’t find the words to describe what’s happened. How they feel, how they’re coping and not coping,” Aberg said.

His 3-year-old grandson was murdered about 11 years ago in Old Lyme by his daughter’s then boyfriend, who was not the father of the child, Aberg said.

“That alone can be isolating,” Aberg said. “It can make people feel that nobody can understand me, if I can’t even describe what I mean.”

Aberg is part of a support group in New London that works under the umbrella of the organization Survivors of Homicide. The group provides emotional and social support to crime victims and their families. There are three other

support groups in the state – one in Danbury, one in New Haven and one in Southington, which is the largest of the four, Aberg said.

Survivors of Homicide is partnering with HRA of New Britain, the City of New Britain, the New Britain Police Department, and Community Mental Health Affiliates this week for National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.

Aberg shared his story Monday during a press conference in the Community Room of the New Britain Police Department to kick off the week.

“It takes so many folks in our community to ensure that we’re promoting our services and that we’re providing an environment that is welcoming and caring to those who are victims,” said Marlo Greponne, director of planning and programs at HRA. New Britain is one of 91 communities participating in the week that is happening around the country, she



Wesley Bunnell | Staff  
Mayor Erin Stewart, left, speaks with Police Commissioner Howard Dyson, right, as Police Chief Christopher Chute, fourth from left, looks on before a kick off event commemorating this week as National Crime Victim’s Rights Week.



Wesley Bunnell | Staff  
John Aberg speaks at a ceremony on National Crime Victim’s Rights Week.

said. This year’s commemoration ends with a walk along the Historic Walking Trail in downtown New Britain from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday. The free event will include organizations that will offer services available to victims of crime.

“In 2019, we still do not have a federal victim’s rights constitutional amendment (that will provide) a uniform standard for victims’ rights across the country,” said Jessica Pizzano, director of Victim Services for Survivors of Homicide, at Monday’s press conference.

In Connecticut, victims or family members of victims can make an impact statement to the court at sentencing Pizzano explained.

“A lot of what proponents of victims’ rights are looking for is just something that’s standardized on the national level because every state’s rights are a little different,” Pizzano said.

In Connecticut, there’s also no punishment if a victim’s rights, such as a notice of a court proceeding is violated, Pizzano said, which makes it hard to ensure victims’ rights are being enforced.

Helen Supsinskas, a Polish Victim Advocate with HRA’s Polish Victim Advocacy Program, also spoke during the press conference, explaining the help she can give to victims of crime who are Polish. New Britain has a large Polish population.

That includes explaining cultural

differences and providing support emotionally, through the criminal justice system, personal advocacy, for translation and transportation for related appointments, for immigration and medical services and other help a victim may need, Suspinskas said.

Karolina Wytrykowska, director of community programs at CMHA also spoke, sharing that her organization was awarded a grant three years ago to help individuals, who may not have insurance, with medical services.

During the press conference, Mayor Erin Stewart read a proclamation recognizing the week and stating the city’s commitment to supporting advocacy groups dedicated to helping crime victims.