

# City programs to focus on crime victims' rights

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NEW BRITAIN — When a person becomes the victim of a crime, it can disrupt their life in ways they may not even be able to imagine.

Sometimes they have to relocate, or face financial challenges. Victims may find the social circles they have been a part of have to be abandoned. Even reporting the crime itself can be difficult.

That's where victim advocacy services can help, said Marlo Greppone, director of planning and programs at the Human Resources Agency of New Britain.

"Things we take for granted can be really difficult for people living in fear," said Greppone. "It's rarely a cut and dry scenario."

From April 7 to April 13, HRA of New Britain and the city will be teaming up to bring awareness to National Crime Victims' Rights Week, which aims to bring awareness to those victim advocacy services. The New Britain Police Department, Community Mental Health Affiliates, and Survivors of Homicide will also be participating.



"New Britain is proud to be an inclusive, trauma-informed community that seeks to uplift one another," said Mayor Erin Stewart. "Together, with our many service providers right here in New Britain, we reaffirm our commitment to empowering individuals from all walks of life. When survivors of crimes or bullying are given the strength and resources they need to heal, we build a stronger community."

To highlight the week, HRA will host a free National Crime Victims' Rights awareness walk in downtown New Britain beginning at 10 a.m. in Central Park. Registration will open at 9:30 a.m.

and the event will run until noon.

Free T-shirts will be given to the first 250 attendees and light refreshments and snacks will also be available for registered walkers. The 1.5-mile loop will follow parts of the downtown Historic Walking Tour Trail.

"It's really meant to help connect people who may potentially be victims of crime, or potentially know victims without breaching confidentiality or betraying their trust," said Greppone of the walk.

HRA offers about 30 community-based programs annually to serve more than 29,000 individuals and families.

While being able to offer the services with a diverse staff to people from all walks of life, Greppone said, the organization has a specific Polish Victim Advocacy Program that was established in 1998.

The program is one of two victim advocacy programs in the state funded by the federal Office of Victim Services, and was created because of the targeted need to help Polish victims of crime in the city, Greppone said.

The New Britain Police Department has bilingual police officers and dispatch officers fluent in English and Polish, the mayor's office said.

New Britain Superior Court employs a translator for Polish speaking offenders, they added.

The prevalence of elder abuse is also increasing, according to HRA, with the U.S. Administration on Aging estimating that 5 million older adults are abused, neglected or exploited.

Some 2,535 Family/Domestic Violence cases were adjudicated in New Britain between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017, according to Connecticut Judicial Branch statistics provided by the mayor's office.

On Monday, April 8, at 3 p.m. in the Community Room of the New Britain Police Department, the mayor will present a proclamation and leaders of victim service organizations as well as survivors of crime will speak.

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