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*For Immediate Release...*

## *Corrections News*

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### **Crime victims deserve recognition, remembrance**

Editorial by George A. Lombardi, Missouri Department of Corrections Director

In a perfect world, there would be no victims of crime. Until then, we face the reality that there continues to be criminal activity and, therefore, crime victims. It is imperative that we recognize these victims and continue to ensure they are given the protection, restitution and information they have a right to. It is also essential for the perpetrators of crime to acknowledge that their actions have real consequences and victimize real people in our Missouri communities.

That is why the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) joins hundreds of other agencies during National Crime Victims' Rights Week to commemorate these victims. During the recent remembrance week, our prisons, community release centers and probation and parole offices held a number of activities in honor of crime victims. Ceremonies were held across the state where speakers such as local officials, state officials, DOC staff, victim advocates, offenders and victims were invited to share their stories. During the week of April 21-27, DOC staff organized a variety of activities in accordance with this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week theme of "New Challenges. New Solutions."

Our Probation and Parole Eastern Region unit in St. Louis held at trivia night on April 27 and donated proceeds of the event to the Crime Victim Advocacy Center, which serves thousands of victims in the St. Louis metro area each year. Almost \$15,000 was raised from the event. On the other side of the state, Maryville Treatment Center and District 40 Probation and Parole office joined other local entities to hold a crime victims' rights ceremony in Maryville and plant a tree in remembrance of victims. Many other moving ceremonies and gestures were done throughout the state such as victim walks, balloon releases, planting flowers, and donating items or funds to victims' groups.

These events are not only important to educate the public about the importance of victims' rights but also to educate the individuals that create victims. That's why some of the victims' ceremonies are held in our prisons – to continue efforts in rehabilitating offenders and help them repair some of the damage they caused to families and communities. During this special week of remembrance, all of our institutions and offices can join in the effort of supporting victims that our Office of Victim Services does on a daily basis. We have a chance to join victim advocacy groups and strive toward a better, brighter future working toward fewer victims and safer communities.

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