



VICTIM WITNESS PROGRAM

By Kayla Smith

An effective Victim Witness Program for Queen Anne's County might not have come into existence without State's Attorney Frank Kratovil's leadership and Michelle Mayoral's fresh ideas. Previous attempts to initiate this much needed program had failed, leaving traumatized victims and witnesses to fend for themselves within a judicial system that often left them confused and without guidance.

Directed by Michelle Mayoral of the State's Attorney's Office, this very effective Victim Witness Program began locally in 2003 when Queen Anne's County received a grant. This program ensures victims and witnesses are kept informed of the status of their cases and are treated in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland.

Surprisingly, victims rights weren't guaranteed until 25 years ago when the Federal Victim and Witness Protection Act was passed. Until its passage victims were not contacted prior to court cases, and both victims and witnesses were often without access to the help needed to understand their situation. The Victim Witness Program grants access to valuable resources, allowing victims and witnesses the opportunity to learn more about their case and linking them to resources that help them understand and cope with the legal proceedings.

Ms. Mayoral believes the program has been a great success and a big help to the attorneys, stating, "Frank [Kratovil] depends on it. It saves the prosecutors time, and gives them better insight into the case." The program also helps victims and witnesses voice what they want from the case. All of this wouldn't have existed without the fresh ideas of Ms. Mayoral and the fierce determination of Mr. Kratovil. Ms. Mayoral, who has had the opportunity to work closely with Mr. Kratovil says, "He is a go-getter. When he has an idea or issue he doesn't give up." Excellent qualities for a congressman, we both agreed.

When asked to describe Mr. Kratovil, Ms. Mayoral choose two very bold words: passionate and energetic. Isn't that what we want in a leader? Someone who believes in what he says and has the energy to see an issue through to the end? As we can see through the successful implementation of the Victim Witness Program these actions ring true with Mr. Kratovil.