Caddo Parish shows support for crime victims

Monday, April 14, 2008
Local law enforcement, crime victims, and the public joined together today to mark the beginning of National Crime Victims? Rights Week, April 13-19.

The event at River View Park on Clyde Fant Parkway in Shreveport coincided with public rallies, candlelight vigils, and other activities held across the nation to honor victims, their families, and those who serve them.

Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator issued a parish-wide proclamation declaring this week in honor of crime victims. ?This year?s theme is ?Justice for Victims. Justice for All.? That means there will be no justice for any of us if we don?t seek greater fairness for victims of crime," Prator said. "It?s time for our community to stand behind those harmed by crime.?

The Sheriff also spoke about free services available to crime victims in Louisiana, such as the Louisiana Automated Victim Notification System, which provides court information and notifies victims when there is a change in an offender's detention status, and the Crime Victims' Reparations Fund, which provides financial assistance to victims of crime.

After the gathering, participants marched together from River View Park to Government Plaza, where a victims' information fair was held. The walk was to raise awareness of victims' rights.

Representatives of a number of agencies staffed booths at 501 Travis Street to distribute information on services and resources available to the community. Agencies participating in the fair were the Caddo Sheriff's Office Crime Victims' Reparations and Elderly Crime Victims' programs, Caddo District Attorney's Victim Assistance Program, Caddo Council on Aging, Shreveport-Caddo Crime Stoppers, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Caddo-Bossier Domestic Task Force and Juvenile Court, YWCA, Shreveport Police Weed and Seed, Legal Aid Services of North Louisiana, the Gingerbread House, the Center for Families, and Volunteers of Youth Justice (CASA).

Justice for victims has progressed dramatically since the 1980s, but officials say there is still far to go. ?Injustice to victims weakens public safety,? said John W. Gillis, director of the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. ?If victims are too discouraged to report crimes or serve as witnesses, our criminal justice system grinds to a halt. Every American has a stake in victims? rights.?

For camera-ready art, statistics, or additional information about National Crime Victims? Rights Week visit http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2008/welcome.html.