

# CRIME VICTIM SERVICES AWARD

## Fayette County, Kentucky, Sheriff's Office



*The Fayette County, KY, Sheriff's Office is presented with the 2015 NSA Crime Victim Services Award. (From l. to r.: NSA Executive Director Jonathan Thompson; Deputy Bernard Palmer, FCSO; Elizabeth Pickett, Director of Public Affairs, FCSO;Carolynn Lee, Director of Amanda's Center, FCSO; NSA President, Sheriff John Aubrey; Sheriff Kathy Witt, FCSO; Diana Ross, Mother of Amanda Ross; Ann Vallandingham, Senior Policy Advisor to the Director, Office for Victims of Crime; Chief Deputy Rodrick Robinson, FCSO; Lt. Colonel Matthew Amato, FCSO; and Tom Seigle, Executive Vice President, Aprriss, sponsor of the NSA Crime Victim Services Award.)*

The NSA Crime Victim Services Award was established in 2005 with funding support from the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice. Since 2008, the award has been generously sponsored by Aprriss, Inc. NSA's Crime Victim Services Committee, chaired by Sheriff Craig Webre (Lafourche Parish, LA), administers this award program, which recognizes "outstanding achievement by a Sheriff's Office in support of victims." The award recipient for 2015 is the Fayette County, KY, Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff Kathy Witt.

The Office of the Fayette County Sheriff (FCSO) strives each day to serve the Lexington-Fayette County community and, moreover, to intervene where there is a gap in community services. Accordingly, under the leadership of Sheriff Witt, the FCSO Victim Services Division was created. Furthermore, when it was noted that the community lacked a centralized point where victims of domestic violence could come for help, referrals, and resources, a 24-hour, all-encompassing resource center was established within the Division in 2010 that provides wrap around services for domestic violence victims.

In 2012, the resource center was officially named Amanda's Center for Local Resources in dedication to the life and memory of Amanda Ross, the victim of a domestic violence murder in the Lexington community. The Center was specifically designed to better address domestic violence crimes by improving investigations and increasing convictions of offenders; improving accessibility of services for victims; and improving collaboration between law enforcement and community agencies. By working hand in hand with the family and friends of domestic violence

victims, and working among a collaboration of twenty community agencies, Amanda's Center has made great strides in improving the services to victims in Lexington-Fayette County. For many domestic violence victims, Amanda's Center has been the answer to protection, healing and a restored life. It is a comforting space, a safe haven for both adults and children.

Amanda's Center is staffed by a director, who holds a Master of Social Work degree; certified domestic violence deputy sheriffs; a certified safety planning deputy; and victim advocates. Collaborating with agencies all across the county, staff members provide each victim with a journal that contains a list of community resources and contact numbers; Amanda's poetry; and space for victims to write their own thoughts while trying to heal from the violence and abuse.

Staff at the Center are also tasked with monitoring the compliance with court orders of nearly 500 domestic violence offenders. The offenders' compliance or noncompliance is communicated to the judge; and noncompliance is also reported to the victim.

In summary, the Sheriff's Office has effectively minimized the barriers to services that victims used to face in the Lexington-Fayette County community, and Amanda's Center has been a key system enhancement to an increasingly strong collaborative community response to victims of domestic violence. Indeed, the Office of the Vice President of the United States, in commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2014, recognized the Fayette County Sheriff's Office and highlighted Amanda's Center as a VAWA success story.

NSA established the Crime Victim Services Award in 2005 to focus national and local attention on law enforcement services to victims of crime; in recognition of the unique needs of crime victims; and to promote assistance by law enforcement as early as possible in the response process. The award is sponsored by Aprriss, Inc., and the deadline for receipt by NSA of 2016 nominations is December 7, 2015. For more information, contact Tim Woods, Director of Government Contracts, at [twoods@sheriffs.org](mailto:twoods@sheriffs.org)