

## **2007 Crime Victim Services Award Winner**

### **Pinal County, Arizona Sheriff's Office**



The Pinal County, Arizona Sheriff's Office (PCSO) is the 2007 recipient of NSA's Crime Victim Services Award. The award recognizes "outstanding achievement by a Sheriff's Office in support of victims." It is funded by the Office for Victims of Crime, US Department of Justice, and administered by the Crime Victim Services Committee, chaired by Sheriff Craig Webre.

In 2004, Sheriff Christopher Vasquez established a Victim Services Unit and a Volunteer Services Program within the Pinal County Sheriff's Office. Approximately twenty volunteers work in the Victim Services Unit, supporting deputies and victims through on-call, crisis response to the crime scene or

hospital, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Volunteers can be quickly dispatched from their homes, which are scattered across the county, directly to the victim of a crime. The volunteers provide grief and loss intervention, assistance to victims in meeting their basic needs, referrals to other helping organizations and agencies, transportation, and follow-up contact. They also accompany deputies for death notifications.

PCSO Administrative Manager Marcia Romano oversees the Volunteer Services Program and developed and implements its rigorous standards. Every volunteer applicant undergoes an extensive vetting and background investigation that includes traffic and criminal history checks, fingerprinting, written, and in-person interviews. Applicants admitted into the Volunteer Services Program must complete 40 hours of orientation trainings and attend 3-hour monthly meetings and in-service trainings.

In addition to the cost savings that volunteers bring to the Victim Services Unit, the Unit also benefits from a program the Sheriff's Office initiated with the Arizona Department of Corrections, where each month, inmates conduct fund raising efforts or donate directly to a victim services fund.

Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano honored the Pinal County Sheriff's Office in March 2007, with "Special Recognition" to the Victim Services Unit for "serving the public through community volunteering." In April 2006, Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard also recognized the PCSO's innovative Volunteer Services Program for "Distinguished Service to Victims of Crime."

Finally, along with the official kudos from the Arizona Governor and Attorney General, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office has received the highest honor attainable. Other state and local agencies in Arizona are soliciting the PCSO Victim Services Unit to mentor them as they seek to replicate its Volunteer Services Program into their own victim advocacy initiatives.