

The History of National Stalking Awareness Month

In January 2004, the National Center for Victims of Crime launched National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM) to increase the public's understanding of the crime of stalking. NSAM emerged from the work of the Stalking Resource Center, a National Center program funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, to raise awareness about stalking and help develop and implement multidisciplinary responses to the crime.

In 2003, the Stalking Resource Center received a call from Debbie Riddle, the sister of Peggy Klinke, who had been murdered by a stalker in California several months earlier. Riddle wanted to transform her family's painful tragedy into a force for good. She particularly wanted to help improve law enforcement's response to stalking and save lives.

Riddle's call set into motion a series of events that produced a concurrent Congressional resolution on stalking; a national program on Lifetime Television, hosted by Erin Brockovich, featuring Peggy Klinke's story; and a Lifetime video, "Stalking: Real Fear, Real Crime," to train law enforcement about the crime. In July 2003, the National Center for Victims of Crime, in partnership with Representative Heather Wilson (R-NM) and Lifetime Television, told Peggy's story at a Congressional briefing on Capitol Hill.

The briefing focused on strategies for strengthening law enforcement's response to stalking. Featured speakers included Diane Stuart, former director of the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice; Tracy Bahm, former director of the Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime; and Mark Wynn, former police officer and stalking expert. Susan Herman, former executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, moderated the briefing.

That same day, Representative Wilson introduced a Congressional resolution to support National Stalking Awareness Month. The following January, the National Center for Victims of Crime launched the first observance of National Stalking Awareness Month and supported communities across the nation in planning the event.

For January 2009, the Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime launched a new Web site, <http://stalkingawarenessmonth.org>, devoted to this annual observance. More than 1.3 million people have visited this Web site, which received top honors in the Astrid international design awards program.