

SAVIN Success Stories

One of the most important ways to promote SAVIN programs is to document “success stories” about how SAVIN helps crime victims and survivors and those who serve them. The “power of the personal stories” of survivors puts a “face” on those whom SAVIN helps, and reminds SAVIN stakeholders about the power of SAVIN as a critical victims’ right *and* service.

Below are “SAVIN success stories” documented by your National Project Team from the recent National Training Workshop and other sources:

“I have an order of protection for myself and my two sons. It’s been going around the court system for months. It can give you a feeling of hopelessness and that no one cares. Your system changes that for me. I can’t tell you what a relief it is to go to [SAVIN] and know where my offender is.”

A stalking and domestic violence victim in Minnesota

“I feel the desperation in victims’ voices when they tell me how afraid they are that their offender has been released without their knowledge. SAVIN provides this necessary information. Victims of crime need this safety net.”

Debra Puglisi Sharp

Delaware author, advocate, and survivor

“I look at SAVIN as an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If we can save any victim out there from being re-victimized in any way, it's going to save our department a lot of time and effort and it’s going to save victims and their families a lot of pain and suffering.”

Sheriff Randy Wright

Shawano County, Wisconsin

From *The Delaware County Daily Times*, Feb. 17, 2010

Kim Ferrell said knowing the release date of her daughter’s killer freed her from becoming defined by tragedy. The mother of the late 16-year-old Faith Sinclair, who was fatally struck down by Lemuel Payne in a hit-and-run accident in August 2008, Ferrell said the Pennsylvania Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification — PA SAVIN — system helped her choose to live her life. “Victims of crimes can choose to define who they are by what happened to them, or they can choose to make it part of their story. Programs like this help people like me make it a part of my story, instead of the loss of my daughter defining who I am.”

Ferrell and her family learned Payne had been freed on bail only after he violated his parole and visited a Philadelphia nightclub in April, she said. "That's how we found out that he was released. Nobody told us. With this program, I'm not going to have to wonder. I'm going to know."

"We work with victims and victim advocacy groups every day, and this notification system will help victims be more proactive and more empowered to ensure their own safety," said Delaware County, PA District Attorney G. Michael Green. This really enhances the counseling and outreach that victim advocates already make available."

From *The Honolulu Advertiser*, March 4, 2010:

".....Jenny and Tip Gilbert have used SAVIN. The Gilbert's daughter, Maile, 6, was kidnapped and murdered in Kailua in 1985. Her murderer, James Lounsbery, is serving a life sentence in Utah. To track his status, the Gilberts can call an 877 number, or go to www.vinelink.com and click on Hawaii — one of 40 states that are part of the same system. "I think SAVIN is invaluable," said Jenny Gilbert. "It's incredible. I pretty much keep track on a regular basis. And because I'm computer illiterate, I just always call."

But what she appreciates most about SAVIN is its automatic alerts should Lounsbery's status change. Knowing she and her husband will be notified immediately has meant a lot, she said.

"That, right there, is the most valuable thing you can possibly imagine for peace of mind," Gilbert said.

Tommy Johnson, deputy director for corrections in Hawaii said SAVIN is a tool that can be used by investigators as well as an offender's family. "I think the system is good for all concerned, and it provides another level of open government for the taxpayers. I believe that the cost to maintain the system we are building now with federal dollars would be in the best interest of the state, the victims and the criminal justice system as a whole, because it's an open system. We would encourage the Legislature to support any measure that would provide permanent funding for the SAVIN project."

From *New York State*:

A young child was present at the time of the domestic violence murder of her mother. She was very traumatized by the event and very frightened that her father would kill her just as he had killed her mom. Custody of the young girl was given to her maternal aunt, a single woman with no child rearing experience. The young girl was waking nightly with night terrors and the aunt was struggling from lack of sleep trying to soothe the young girl while also dealing with her own grief.

The aunt called victim services clearly exhausted. She was looking for ways to help her niece sleep through the night without night terrors. Staff discussed the SAVIN service as not only a notification service but also an information service. Perhaps if the young girl could call the SAVIN service and hear that her father remained in custody, it would help her feel safe. The young girl was taught to dial the toll-free number, follow the prompts and hear that her father was in custody. In a few short weeks the young girl was able to independently verify that her father was in custody and she was able to self-soothe herself back to sleep confident that he was not returning to kill her. Several months later, the aunt called victim services and reported that the young girl was sleeping much better, eating much better, and teachers were reporting that she was no longer combative in school. The aunt was sure that the information the young girl was able to access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week was an important factor in the girl's improvements in sleep, peer interactions and nutrition.