



# Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society

2017 Annual General Meeting  
Submitted by Angie Wright – Executive Director

ADVAS continues to offer:

- Free and confidential crisis and follow-up support, information, referrals to everyone,
- Victim Impact Statements, Financial Benefits, Request for Restitution, and the Victims of Crime Protocol outlining what to expect when you're involved in the Criminal Justice System
- Court preparation and accompaniment,
- Resources and information specific to people's needs and
- Assistance for individuals affected by assault, family violence and domestic assault, sudden death, theft, break and enter, sexual assault, harassment and more.

## TRENDS AND CHANGES OF 2016

- Population growth in the areas ADVAS serves has increased. As the communities continue to grow, the need for specialized support services is evident. There is no shelter, sexual assault services, addiction treatment programs or long term mental health support programs in the communities we support. Victims continue to wait for increased lengths of time to get the support they need, therefore leaving ADVAS filling the gap in the interim.
- ADVAS experienced a 20% increase from 2015 to 2016 in the number of files supported by staff and volunteers.
- The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT), Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) & Calgary Police Services (CPS) have utilized the ADVAS programs & services to support victims of serious crime.
- RCMP Southern Alberta District (SAD) is located on the second floor of the Airdrie RCMP detachment. ADVAS provides support to those units as requested.
- Decreased funding from other grant sources and loss of major funders over the past few years. This same trend is expected throughout 2017.
- Increased expectations by Justice Services of staff & volunteers in court has continued from 2015.
- Long term volunteer commitment continues to be a challenge thus increasing the time on-call that staff members are inputting.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

ADVAS applies for sustainable funding from the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) and annual FCSS and other provincial grants. Funding fluctuates (ie. reduced funding from FCSS programs) and to maintain and sustain our programs and services we continue to fundraise and gratefully accept donations. JSG funds 46% of our annual budget, FCSS and other grants 24%, fundraising and donations make up the remaining 30% each year.

Due to the economic downturn over the past several years and through 2016, fundraising events and donations to ADVAS were down in 2016.

The Community Initiative Planning (CIP) grant which was received in late 2015 has been used to hire a Fund Development Coordinator to assist with achieving long term sustainable funding to accomplish financial wellness. This position will expire at the end of 2017 as the grant was only over a two year period.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES – WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?**

The ADVAS Board currently has eight directors and three RCMP liaison officers. Nine new volunteer victim advocates joined the Society in 2016. ADVAS currently has 14 volunteer advocates and 7 new volunteers at various stages of security clearance and training. A total of thirty-two volunteers and four staff make up the current human resources of ADVAS.

- In 2016, ADVAS volunteers and staff, in partnership with the RCMP, contributed over 3,600 hours of their time and talents to support victims in our community.
- Volunteers and staff were available for 24 hour on call crisis support for a total of over 20,000 hours in 2016.
- ADVAS assisted 4,928 people (3,566 adults and 1,362 children) in 2016. An increase of 25% from 2015 and a substantial 87% increase in the last 5 years.
- The Society provided 8,400 services to victims in 2016, an increase of 25% from 2015 and a 127% increase in the past five years. These services included; crisis intervention in victim's homes, on scene or at the detachment, providing information during follow up phone calls, victims program packages, referral mail outs and court support.
- Court support has increased significantly by 110% over the last five years.
- Volunteers and staff worked on 2,753 files, a 20% growth from 2015 and 121% growth over the last five years. Domestic violence, criminal harassment, assault, sexual assault and family issues continue to be the greatest number of files referred to ADVAS.
- Domestic Violence files increased by 19% from 2015 and 208% over the last five years.
- Criminal Harassment files decreased by 9% from 2015 and increased by 246% over the last five years.
- Sexual Assaults increased by 58% from 2016 and 187% over the last five years.
- Family issues includes: communication, relationship and parenting challenges, all sudden deaths, next of kin notifications, mental health issue, civil matters, restraining orders and legal concerns.

The board has identified the need to increase the number of board members with specific skill sets to continue moving the Society forward. Front line volunteers will continue to be recruited to meet the operational needs of the organization in 2016 - 2017.

- Cross training between all staff positions continues to occur on an ongoing basis.
- Staff continue to participate in the Provincial Wellness Project through APBVSA as wellness of our Society is foremost in the minds of ADVAS. The nature of the work done by frontline volunteers, court volunteers and staff lends itself to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. The Provincial Wellness Team Project to address psychological consequences of victim services work was rolled out in 2015.

## **VICTIM SUPPORT AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

ADVAS strives to ensure every person impacted by crime has been informed of the programs and services offered by the Justice and Solicitor General. We also recognize that crime is ever changing and victimization requires current and up to date information.

### **Online Resources for Victims:**

The online resource is reviewed and new resources are updated quarterly to reflect the trends and changes in victimization. The following online resources in the crime and trauma areas include; domestic violence, sexual assault, assault, internet crimes, suicide, bullying, grief and more. Victims impacted by these crimes and emotional trauma can now access support, information and referrals in the privacy of their homes. On line resources in no way replace the front line work of the ADVAS volunteers and staff, they enhance the longer term support people may need or wish to explore. To learn more about online victim support visit [www.airdrievictimassistance.com](http://www.airdrievictimassistance.com)

### **Social Media:**

An administrative page for FaceBook advertising and Twitter continues to increase public awareness, assist with volunteer recruitment, provide online support for victims and generate online donations.

In 2016, 2,916 new viewers visited our website. These results were gathered from the Google analytics website dashboard reports.

The dashboard results indicate that visitor's access the victim's resource page more frequently and remain on this page for longer periods of time. More people are accessing our website directly, evident in the spike visits after public awareness events. The awareness, recruitment, access to victim's resources and financial support goals of social media advertisement far outweighs all other forms of advertising.

## **EVALUATING OUR PERFORMANCE**

The 2016 outcome based evaluations from victims and volunteer advocates indicate that ADVAS has once again successfully supported victims of crime and tragedy and remains strongly committed to volunteers and their success as advocates.

Victims who completed the 2016 ADVAS satisfaction survey strongly agree or agree that the services ADVAS provided were compassionate, timely, appropriate, professional, and the information provided was appropriate.

### **Comments from victims: Crisis and Follow up Support**

- Info that this sort of support is available
- They were helpful and followed up which was nice
- I spoke with staff about some ongoing situations still happening and they gave me a suggestion about how to try to resolve the situation.

### **Comments from victims: Court Support**

- Anytime I called, emailed or physically came in, someone was always available to answer any questions or address any concerns. All very knowledgeable and if they didn't have an immediate answer, they found out and got back to me.
- The resources I learnt about are incredible.
- Support was amazing, follow ups and checking on my wellbeing I personally felt so protected and safe.
- Thank you for being there for me – great program and great supporting team.
- Kept us aware of what was happening in court and what it is supposed to mean.
- I feel safer in my home and stronger and more confident as a person and have better knowledge when dealing with situations.
- Shown us that they will support us.

Volunteer Advocates who completed the 2016 satisfaction survey strongly agree or agree that ADVAS is committed to their success as a volunteer, they are committed to their volunteer role, communication is effective, their strengths are utilized, training opportunities are meaningful and prepare them for their volunteer work and their work is recognized and celebrated.

### **Comments from volunteers:**

- Ongoing great training & support
- This role empowers me to support my clients at work
- Provides me great learning opportunities
- As I have said "I found home" and it is an opportunity well suited to me.
- We have had a growing year and are now getting back on track.
- I still love being an advocate and am proud to do the things I do. I also love the other advocates and have learned so much.
- I am very thankful to be a part of a great team. They are very understanding with advocates and their lives.

Major stakeholders and community partners recognize the value of ADVAS programs and services, and the general public is aware of who we are. Victims however have reported that they were unaware of the Society until they needed our support. ADVAS continues to promote programs and services in public forums, through social media, in newspaper reports, at community events and advertisement in the Airdrie Resource Book.

## **COLLOABRATION**

ADVAS has developed strong partnerships with numerous community agencies based on the current and changing needs of victims of crime and tragedy.

ADVAS sat on the Domestic Violence Steering Committee geared to research Domestic Violence Gender Based Study in Airdrie. The findings of that research and report will be presented to City Council in early 2017.

ADVAS actively participates as a member of the Prevention of Family Violence Interagency Committee. Stakeholders in this committee include: Provincial Crown Prosecutor, Probation, RCMP Domestic Violence Unit, Home Front, Y.W.C.A. Sheriff King House, Alberta Health Services and Community Links Society.

ADVAS supported approximately 76 victims in 2016 whose partners were mandated through court to participate in the Men's and Women's Domestic Violence Treatment Program in 2016. ADVAS provides follow up calls to ensure that victims feel safe and supported during the 14 week program. This work is now reflected in the Justice and Solicitor General Logic Model outcome reports.

ADVAS has linked the following agencies to our webpage for victims to access directly: Community Links Society, Airdrie Mental Health, CCASA, Alberta Solicitor General Victims of Crime Services and Programs.

## **OUR FOCUS**

**VISION:** A community that assists in bridging the gap from hurt to hope to empower victims to take control of their experience as it becomes part of their life.

**MISSION:** to respect the victims we support by providing a compassionate response, emotional and practical assistance, information on victims' rights and referrals necessary to help reduce the negative impact of victimization.

### **VALUES:**

We value integrity and confidentiality

We value and respect supportive community relationships

We value and respect professional relationship with the RCMP, our Board, staff and volunteers

We value diverse, highly trained and skilled people who deliver superior services

We value a sincere, compassionate and timely response for all

We value exceptional services delivered in a diverse, non-judgmental manner for all

We value providing accountable and fiscally responsible quality services

Thanks to everyone involved in ADVAS over 2016. Your support and commitment to the organization and the communities we serve is greatly appreciated.