



Progress Report '08

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CENTER CO-PRESENTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR GLBT CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

Topics include GLBT Homicide and Keynote Address by Judy Shepard

Nearly 140 professionals from 25 states and seven foreign countries were in attendance at the 12th Annual Gay Officers Action League conference held at George Washington University in Washington DC in mid-May. This year's conference was co-presented by the Washington, DC-based Mid-Atlantic Gay Officer's Action League (GOAL) and the Center for Homicide Research. The conference brought together GLBT criminal justice professionals from every level of law enforcement, including chiefs of police, assistant chiefs, detectives and officers.

The conference, one of the largest in recent years, featured keynote addresses by Judy Shepard, mother of murdered gay college student Matthew Shepard, and Commander Dave O'Malley, retired police chief of Laramie, Wyoming and principal investigator in the Shepard case.

The four-day conference included presentations on hate crimes, homicide, coming out, professional development, and the role of law enforcement in major social events such as the Holocaust.

"The Center is very pleased to have been a part of such an important conference for the GLBT and law

enforcement communities." said Joe Shulka, President of the CHR Board of Directors. "Two decades ago it was almost unimaginable for a police officer to be openly gay. The GLBT community has often had an adversarial relationship with law enforcement. This conference shows that both the GLBT community and law enforcement have both come a long way."

The Center for Homicide Research played a significant role in this conference. The Center's Principal

Researcher Dallas Drake delivered four separate workshop presentations to police officers, corrections officers and other criminal justice professionals. Drake is often regarded as a national expert on the topic of GLBT homicide.

His workshops included valuable findings from the Center's ongoing research. The goals of his presentations were to assist law enforcement in identifying and solving difficult-to-solve homicides or other deaths.

Drake's presentations included an in-depth, case-based analysis of sexual asphyxia, the often fatal practice of restricting oxygen flow to the brain to heighten arousal.

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Joe Shulka, CHR Board President (l); Judy Shepard, Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation (c); and Dallas Drake, CHR Principal Researcher (r)

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENT RESEARCHERS CONTINUES TO GROW

More than 100 Involved so Far in 2008

One of the core values of the Center for Homicide Research is to create community experts on the issue of homicide. The principal way this is done is through the involvement of a dedicated, trained group of student research volunteers.

Through partnerships with more than a dozen universities and colleges from across the region and the nation, undergraduate, graduate and law students participate in a unique, structured learning opportunity that puts them on the front lines of homicide research and investigation. Student researchers are involved on several levels, based upon their skills level and which educational program they are involved in.

Service-Learning


Many colleges and universities require undergraduate students to do a service-learning project as part of course requirements. The Center involves many service-learning students each semester. These undergraduate students usually perform between 30-40 hours of volunteer services within a semester conducting research and basic analysis, and participating in active learning at the Center. Service-learning students are very involved in the Center's work.

Undergraduate and Graduate Internships

Students seeking a more in-depth involvement often undertake a formal internship with the Center. Internships require a commitment of at least 160 hours of service and usually culminate in a project or paper. Interns are often upper-level undergraduate students (many involved in honors or capstone projects) or graduate students. Interns must make application for these limited positions, and take a pre- and post-internship exam. Interns may attend conferences and seminars on behalf of the Center, often presenting their own work or findings. Graduate student interns may gain access to the Center's research data for analysis for their master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Law School Research Clerkships

Through a collaboration with the Minnesota Justice Foundation (MJF), the Center now offers a unique clerkship opportunity for first or second-year law students. Law students from Hamline University School of Law, the University of Minnesota Law School, University of St. Thomas School of Law and William Mitchell College of Law are encouraged to become interns at the Center. A commitment of at least 80 hours per semester is required.

Professors or administrators interested in offering students a service-learning or internship opportunity at the Center should contact Dallas Drake at dallas.drake@mindspring.com. More information is also available at www.CHROnline.org. 

INTERN PROFILE: CANDICE DEROCKBRAINE

*Internship Aids Native American Student
Address Impact of Homicides*


Candace DeRockbraine originally came to the Center for Homicide Research in February of 2008 as a service-learning student. She needed to fulfill a 40-hour volunteer requirement as part of a course in Police in the Community. Many sites could be used to complete that requirement, but DeRockbraine chose CHR for a reason.



Everyone seems to come to the Center for Homicide Research for a reason. Nearly one-third of CHR volunteer staff have personal experience due to loss by homicide. DeRockbraine is no exception. She grew up just south of South Dakota's Standing Rock Indian reservation where violence is endemic, and lethal violence is all too common. During her research with CHR, Candace came across the name of a family friend, Candace Rough Surface, who had been murdered. DeRockbraine also had an aunt, Bernice DeRockbraine, who was beheaded during an intimate-partner homicide. These personal connections to homicide can make for difficult days in the Center's office.

DeRockbraine describes, "Homicide interferes with the natural course of life. The act of violent-homicide produces results that are very shattering... The constant pain, unanswered questions and confusion does not go away easily. Neither does the question, 'Why?'" Homicide again impacted DeRockbraine's life when her best friend, an openly gay man, was thrown from a third story hotel room in Aberdeen, South Dakota several years ago. He survived, but with severe, irreversible, brain damage. Because of the injuries, he no longer recognizes Candace.

Thanks to a contract between CHR and Century College's ISLET Project, funded by the National Science Foundation, DeRockbraine found a unique place to find hope and healing for her own pain, and perhaps the pain of others. The Center is researching GLBT homicide in South Dakota due to an apparent over-incidence of GLBT homicide cases identified by CHR research to develop the National Database of GLBT Homicide.

DeRockbraine is currently continuing her service at the Center and is working toward a full internship of 160 hours. 

Looking for a way to make an impact on homicide or violence?

Consider making a donation to the Center for Homicide Research in memorial or honor of a loved one. Your generosity will help support our unique educational efforts and provide resources to help solve and prevent homicide.

Donate online at www.CHROnline.org

NEW PROGRAM OFFERED FOR HOMICIDE INVESTIGATORS

*Intensive, On-site Training Offers
Chance to Improve and Learn New Skills*

Investigators looking for an opportunity to advance their understanding of the phenomenon of homicide have a new opportunity at the Center for Homicide Research. The Center now offers an individualized, intensive study program tailored to meet the needs of both experienced and new homicide investigators.

This unique opportunity offers a “learning sabbatical” for investigators, away from the front lines, where they can develop an advanced understanding of the homicide event and its analysis. The program offers investigators a retreat to step away from the daily pressures of investigations to reevaluate their own effectiveness and investigational procedures. This program offers the chance to learn about new research as well as proven tactics.

The Center provides an immersion style seminar, with structured learning as well as independent study. Participants will have access to the Center’s resource library with more than 1,200 books, an extensive vertical file, and 16 journals. Programs can be up to five days in length.


Participants select their own areas of study with individualized training from Center for Homicide Research staff. Participants work both independently and side-by-side with others to learn and understand critical aspects of homicide and about the unique aspects which compose the homicide phenomenon.

Topics available include:

- *Lethality*: What makes killing successful?
- *Paraphilias*: Investigating the deviant homicide
- *Gay/Lesbian Homicide*: Solving the fatal encounter
- *Expressive Homicide*: Investigation of symbolic attacks
- *Anti-social Semiotics*: Signs of killing
- *Missing Victim Homicides*: Adults play hide & seek
- *Crime-mapping*: Connecting all the dots
- *Police and the Media*: Taming the news dragon
- *Deviant Homicides*: Sex on the brain
- *Increasing Solvability*: Achieving 100% clearance

For specialized training needs or other topics, please contact the Center and allow for adequate lead time.

There is not a fee associated with the Center’s program, but participants are encouraged to make a tax-deductible contribution. Expenses related to housing, meals and airfare are the responsibility of each participant.


To discuss the program and enrollment, contact Principal Researcher, Dallas Drake at dallas.drake@mindspring.com or by telephone at (612) 331-4820, or visit the Center’s website at www.CHRonline.org. 

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE (cont.)

Sexual asphyxia is often difficult to identify and can easily be misidentified as suicide or homicide. Drake also trained officers on investigational tactics to improve identification in equivocal homicide.

Another workshop centered around helping to identify gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims and offenders using semiotics, the study of signs and symbols. The GLBT community has long used items like pink triangles and tattoos to identify themselves. But understanding more subtle symbolism can be critical in investigating homicide cases. Finally, Drake trained on the difficult topic of deviant GLBT homicide which usually manifests as hate crime homicide.

In addition to group training, Drake and Shulka met individually with several investigators and officers attending the conference to provide input and resources on active and cold case GLBT homicide investigations.

The conference coincided with National Police Week, a national event honoring law enforcement professionals who have been killed in the line of duty. 

HOMICIDE RESEARCH ADVISORY PANEL ESTABLISHED

Nine of the nation’s leading homicide researchers have joined as charter members of the Center’s Research Advisory Panel. Panel members represent diverse disciplines within the study of criminology and homicide.

Lin Huff-Corzine, Ph.D.
University of Central Florida

Gary Jensen, Ph.D.
Vanderbilt University

Vance McLaughlin, Ph.D.
Jacksonville State University

Thomas Petee, Ph.D.
Auburn University

Wendy Regoeczi, Ph.D.
Cleveland State University

Marc Riedel, Ph.D.
Southeastern Louisiana University

C. Gabrielle Salfati, PhD
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Roger B. Trent, Ph.D.
California Department of Public Health

Kimberly A. Vogt, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

STUDENT RESEARCHER FOCUSES ON JUVENILE HOMICIDE IN MINNESOTA

Juvenile offenders of crime receive the lion's share of media stories and are blamed for increases in "dangerous crimes." A study by CHR intern Amanda Peterson challenged this assertion.

A 2008 graduate of the University of Minnesota, Peterson was one of three presenters from the Center for Homicide Research who spoke at the Conference of the Minnesota Social Service Association in Bloomington in March. Her presentation focused on Juvenile Homicide in Minnesota using data collected by the Center for our database investigating the prevalence of GLBT homicide.

Many community leaders and researchers have asserted that juvenile offending is linked to increases in crime. In 1995, the term "Superpredator" was coined by John DiIulio to describe a new breed of juvenile offender. Many terms are used liberally that make this assertion – terms like, "dangerous crime" or "serious crime" – without actually defining the crime type.

Peterson investigated whether juvenile offenders were the cause of increased levels of homicide offending in Minnesota. In previous research, increases in homicide have been shown to not be the result of fluctuating demographics in the juvenile population. Peterson's analysis used data comparing two periods of homicide offenses, 1996-1997 and 2006-2007. A special offender-based dataset was developed to analyze all offender-level data.

The results of her study show a nearly insignificant change in the percentage of juvenile offenders involved in homicide. However, during this time Minnesota saw a significant decrease in homicides, making the percent change in juvenile offending appear more significant than they truly are. The fact is that homicide in Minnesota is down, and the proportion of juvenile offending did not significantly increase.

While juveniles may account for increases in some crimes, they do not account for significant increases in the homicide problem in Minnesota during the time period studied.

Distribution of Juvenile and Adult Offenders by Year
CHR - Homicides in Minnesota
1996-1997 and 2006-2007

Year	Juvenile	Adult	Total
1996	(13) 7.2%	(167) 92.8%	180
1997	(21) 15.1%	(118) 84.9%	139
2006	(20) 14.4%	(119) 85.6%	139
2007	(11) 9.9%	(100) 90.1%	111

An important consideration is that previous research by Kathleen Heide (1999) indicates juveniles are more likely to offend in pairs or groups. Peterson's data of Minnesota homicides did not support this assertion.

Data should be collected and analyzed for the complete decade from 1996-2007 to determine if Peterson's findings are to be considered significant.

2008 CONFERENCES AND TRAINING

This year is shaping up to be the busiest and most productive one yet for the Center for Homicide Research and its volunteer research staff. Training continues to be a major focus again this year.

Conference/Presentation	Date(s)
Conference on Crimes Against Women	February 11-13
The Children's Theatre Company <i>The Laramie Project (post-performance discussion)</i>	March 13
Minnesota Social Service Association	March 25-28
14th Annual Homicide Conference	April 2-4
Midwest Qualitative Research Conference	March 17-18
Minnesota Chiefs of Police Annual Meeting	April 21-22
12th Annual International GLBT Criminal Justice Professionals Conference	May 10-15
Guest Lecture - Family Violence Course Century College	June 4
Homicide Research Working Group	June 11-14
Twin Cities GLBT Pride Festival	June 28-29
International Homicide Investigators Association Training Symposium	August 24-29
Minnesota Geographic/Land Information Systems Consortium	October 1-3
American Society of Criminologists	November 12-15
Criminal Investigation Summit <i>Funded by the National Science Foundation</i>	November TBD

The Center also offers individualized training, seminars and workshops. For more information, call (612) 331-4820.

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Homicide Research is an independent, volunteer-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of the community, criminal justice professionals, and law enforcement to become more effective in identifying, solving and preventing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homicides.

Research began in 1992 and incorporated in 1999 as a nonprofit organization called the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. In 2004, the name was changed to the Center for Homicide Research.

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