

CCV Year-End News 2007

December 26, 2007

Special points of interest:

- Murder victims' family members played a key role in New Jersey abolition
- The California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice will hold its first hearing on the death penalty on January 10th—sign up to attend!

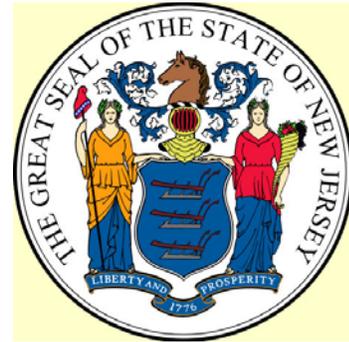
Inside this issue:

<i>Stress Management During the Holidays and Always</i>	2
<i>CCV Members Speak at Walk to Stop Executions Rallies</i>	3
<i>CCV to Publish Booklet of Member Stories</i>	3
<i>California Commission to Hold First Death Penalty Hearings in January</i>	4

New Jersey Legislature Abolishes the Death Penalty

On December 17, 2007, Governor Jon Corzine of New Jersey signed into a law a bill that abolishes New Jersey's death penalty. With this act, New Jersey became the 14th U.S. state with no death penalty and the first state since 1965 to abolish the death penalty through legislation. The decision has been celebrated around the world, and Rome's Colosseum was lit up in a show of support.

Murder victims' family members played a huge role in accomplishing abolition in New Jersey. In his signing statement for the bill, Governor Corzine specifically noted that five members of the Death Penalty Study Commission that had recommended abolition "were directly impacted by the



violence of murder in their families." One of those members was Eddie Hicks, whose daughter

Jamila was murdered in North Carolina in 2000. Eddie, who lives in Galloway Township, New Jersey, sat on the Commission as the representative from Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR).

Another key player in the New Jersey victory was Lorry Post, who hails from

(Continued on page 3)

CCV Holds Training Day in Oakland

On November 17th, 24 people gathered in Oakland for a day of training and sharing their stories. Both CCV members and the board of MVFR were in attendance. Highlights of the day included a presentation on lobbying led by Matt Gray of the Capital Alliance (along with longtime citizen lobbyists Nick & Amanda Wilcox) and a workshop on telling your story led by experienced speakers Aundré Herron,

Derrel Myers, and Aba Gayle. MVFR board members Cathy Ansheles and Peter Loge also shared their advice on reaching out to other survivors and communicating with the media. The event proved to be a good opportunity for members to meet one another and share their thoughts and advice on the challenges of advocating against the death penalty as survivors.

How to Keep Stress Under Control During the Holidays ... and Always

What can we all do to deal with stress overload or, better yet, to avoid it in the first place? The most helpful method of dealing with stress for murder victim family members and for anyone is learning how to manage the stress that comes along with any new challenge, good or bad. Stress-management skills work best when they're used regularly, not just during the holidays or around important anniversaries. Knowing how to "de-stress" and doing it when things are relatively calm can help you get through challenging circumstances that may arise. Here are some things that can help keep stress under control.

Take a stand against overscheduling. If you're feeling stretched, consider cutting out an activity or two, opting for just the ones that are most important to you.

Be realistic. Don't try to be perfect - no one is. And expecting others to be perfect can add to your stress level, too (not to mention put a lot of pressure on them!). If you need help on something ask for it.

Get a good night's sleep. Getting enough sleep helps keep your body and mind in top shape, making you better equipped to deal with any negative stressors. Because the biological "sleep clock" shifts during adolescence, many teens prefer staying up a little later at night and sleeping a little later in the morning. But if you stay up late and still need to get up early for school, you may not get all the hours of sleep you need.

Learn to relax. The body's natural antidote to stress is called the relaxation response. It's your body's opposite of stress, and it creates a sense of well-being and calm. The chemical benefits of the relaxation response can be activated simply by relaxing. You can help trigger the relaxation response by learning simple breathing exercises and then using them when you're caught up in stressful situations. Stay relaxed by building time into your day for activities that are calming and pleasurable: reading a good book or making time for a hobby, spending time with your

pet, or just taking a relaxing bath.

Treat your body well. Experts agree that getting regular exercise helps people manage stress. (Excessive or compulsive exercise can contribute to stress, though, so as in all things, use moderation.) And eat well to help your body get the right fuel to function at its best. It's easy when you're stressed out to eat on the run or eat junk food or fast food. But under stressful conditions, the body needs its vitamins and minerals more than ever. Some people may turn to substance abuse as a way to ease tension. Although alcohol or drugs

may seem to lift the stress temporarily, relying on them to cope with stress actually promotes more stress because it wears down the body's ability to bounce back.

Watch what you're thinking. Your outlook, attitude, and thoughts influence the way you see things. Is your cup half full or half empty? A healthy dose of optimism can help you make the best of stressful circumstances. Even if you're out of practice, or tend to be a bit of a pessimist, everyone can learn to think more optimistically and reap the benefits.

Solve the little problems. Learning to solve everyday problems can give you a sense of control. But avoiding them can leave you feeling like you have little control and that just adds to stress. Develop skills to calmly look at a problem, figure out options, and take some action toward a solution. Feeling capable of solving little problems builds the inner confidence to move on to life's bigger ones - and it can serve you well in times of stress.

Reference:
National Institute of Health

For more information on stress, stress-management, and conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, please visit:
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stress.html>

"Stress-management skills work best when they're used regularly."

CCV Members Speak at Walk to Stop Executions Rallies Throughout California

As the Walk to Stop Executions wended its way from San Diego to Sacramento, CCV members spoke at rallies along its 800-mile course. The purpose of the walk was to urge the district attorneys in counties throughout California not to seek death sentences. Veteran walkers Jeff Ghelardi and Richard Carlburg traveled the entire distance on foot, taking turns carrying the lantern that was the symbol of their journey.

Murder victims' family members played a crucial role in conveying the walk's message from start to finish. Azim Khamisa participated in the event at its start in San Diego by writing a supportive op-ed piece. Aqeela Sherrills ad-



Vera Ramirez-Crutcher at the WTSE Rally in Ventura

ressed the next rally in Los Angeles, and Vera Ramirez-Crutcher spoke to Ventura county supporters.

Speakers from the Bay Area included Derrel Myers in Santa Cruz, Mary Kay Raftery in San Jose, Judy Kerr in Oakland, Aba Gayle at San Quentin and Amanda Wilcox in Sacramento.

The walk concluded in Sacramento on November 30th, with a large crowd in attendance. This was followed by a positive meeting with a representative from California Attorney General Jerry Brown's office.

For more on the walk, visit <http://walktostopexecutions.blogspot.com/>.

CCV to Publish Booklet of Member Stories; MVFR Seeks Additional Stories for "Not in Our Name—California"

The booklet of CCV member stories and statements against the death penalty has made its way to the publisher, and will be available in early January. The title of booklet will be *VOICES from California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty*, and it will contain twelve statements from CCV members regarding their opposition to the death penalty. CCV would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed, and especially those members who have not

previously shared their stories with such a broad audience.

MVFR will soon start work on an additional booklet that will serve as the California edition of their "Not In Our Name" series, and is seeking additional stories for that booklet. If you are interested in contributing to this project, please contact John Carella at john@deathpenalty.org.

New Jersey Makes History with Abolition

(Continued from page 1)

Cape May, New Jersey and founded New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Lorry's daughter Lisa was murdered in 1988, and he has long worked against the death penalty on behalf of murder victims' family members, including as a board member of MVFR and a contributor to MVFR's "Not In Our Name" booklets. Lorry was recently named the Executive Director of MVFR.

The fact that murder victims' families' voices could be heard in opposition to the death penalty in New Jersey clearly made an impression on both the Governor and legislature, and was an indispensable piece of the New Jersey abolition campaign. This is heartening news to CCV as it looks forward to participating in the upcoming hearings on the death penalty in California, the first of which is January 10th in Sacramento. For more on these hearing, see the back page.

**CALIFORNIA CRIME VICTIMS FOR
ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY**

870 Market Street
Suite 859
San Francisco, CA 94102

Phone: 415-262-0082
Fax: 415-243-0994
Email: john@deathpenalty.org

california
Crime Victims
for **Alternatives**
to the Death Penalty

www.CaliforniaCrimeVictims.org

California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is a coalition of families, friends, and loved ones of murder victims who oppose the death penalty. The coalition supports families, friends, and loved ones in telling their stories and being heard. CCV educates the public about alternatives to the death penalty and provides information, resources, and support to families regardless of their views on the death penalty or whether the perpetrator has been apprehended.

CCV is a joint project of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, Death Penalty Focus, and the ACLU of Northern California.

CCV Staff:

Judy Kerr, Victim Liaison and Spokesperson
Judy@deathpenalty.org
(415) 293-6382

John Carella, Program Coordinator
John@deathpenalty.org
(415) 262-0082

Join CCV in Sacramento on January 10th for First Commission Hearing on the Death Penalty

The California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice was created by the California Senate "to examine the causes of wrongful convictions and make recommendations and proposals to further insure that the administration of criminal justice in California is just, fair, and accurate." The Commission will hold three hearings in the coming months to examine issues surrounding the death penalty. The first of these hearings will take place on January 10th, 2008 in Room 4203 of the State Capitol in Sacramento. The hearing will take place in two parts from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The hearing will conclude with a one-hour public comment period.

CCV will be present throughout the hearings, and is encouraging members to show their opposition to the death penalty and make comments during the comment period. **Those interested in attending this hearing should fill out the enclosed form and fax it**

to CCV, or email John at john@deathpenalty.org. An on-line sign up for the hearings will be available on the Commission's website beginning at 10:00 a.m. on January 8th. CCV can assist those members who need transportation for the hearings.

We hope to see you there!

