

## **Volunteer Experience with VOI - Jill Nore**

I've worked for the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) for 17 years. The first 10 years were spent working in the Community Corrections arena. I always felt that having worked in a Community Corrections facility made me a better program auditor for DCJ. So, 7 years ago, when I transferred to the DCJ Office for Victim Programs unit I felt like I would have a better perspective if I obtained direct experience with crime victims.

I selected VOI because of their good reputation and because they provided services to my community (Arvada). I honestly figured I would volunteer for a year and move on. Here I am, 6 years later... Time flies! I have been continually inspired by the incredibly dedicated and friendly team of staff and volunteers. The work advocates do is not always satisfying and it is certainly not glamorous. I learn something new on every call. I still remember the staff (in training) saying "every call is different and there is no manual to get you through every situation"...What?! I tend to be a linear thinker and that statement was hard for me to understand. I wanted a manual to solve each problem! I now understand what they meant and I agree with the statement. Each call comes with a unique set of details and human emotions and the key for me has been to take a breath, stop and truly listen to the victim. Listening will lead the way to providing the services appropriate for each person.

I am often asked why I have done this challenging volunteer work for so long. I'm not sure there is an easy answer. My mind travels back to a difficult call I had one Christmas night. A teen boy had committed suicide and I was called to provide services to the father. The father had no one to call, no support system and was understandably not consolable. I honestly felt very inadequate as an advocate because I felt there was nothing I could do or say to this father. We spent hours together that night, sitting in the hospital silently holding hands. After awhile he started telling me stories about his son. I quietly sat and listened. Several hours passed. His parents arrived after driving several hours from another state. They were able to take him home. As he turned to leave, he stopped and hugged me and told me that my time spent with him meant the world to him.

That call forever changed me. I think of that father each Christmas and hope he has been able to find some happiness again. This call has kept me going for years. It made me realize how valuable we can be during crisis situations.