



# JUSTICE FOR ALL

October/November 2000

## Department of Justice Focuses on Protecting Elderly Americans

November is a month when many Justice Department employees look forward to spending time with family and friends. But the upcoming holiday season can also be a trying time for families worried about parents, grandparents and friends who are growing older.

We all want to do the best we can to ensure that no one takes advantage of, neglects, or harms these individuals. But the elderly population of this country is growing. Due in part to aging baby boomers and advanced medical techniques that lengthen lifespans, about 34 million of this country's citizens are currently over 65. That number is expected to more than double in the next 30 years. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of this growth both on the nation and on each of us as we care for older family members and prepare for our own futures.

The Justice Department has an important role in assuring that our justice system is responsive to the needs of this growing population of older Americans. Our "Elder Justice" effort must apply a multi-disciplinary approach that will prevent elder abuse and neglect, encourage trained professionals to intervene at the first sign of a problem, and, where appropriate, prosecute wrongdoers aggressively, fairly, and with sensitivity to the most appropriate remedy.

The evolving role of the Department in Elder Justice began with efforts to protect older Americans from street crime, and it has continued with efforts to fight health care fraud, consumer fraud and civil rights violations. More recently, our Elder Justice efforts have focused on elder abuse and neglect prevention and prosecution, spanning the continuum of care – from homes to nursing homes.

Recent studies have found that despite some improvements, seriously inadequate care persists at far too many of our nursing homes, causing untold suffering, illness and sometimes death for our frailest older citizens. As you may know, the Justice Department launched its Nursing Home Initiative in October 1998. Since its inception, the Initiative has developed an ambitious plan to help protect vulnerable nursing home residents. This plan includes stepping up enforcement efforts, and seeking remedies that protect residents, recoup fraudulently obtained funds, and

punish and deter wrongdoing. For example, we are bringing more civil False Claims Act prosecutions for failure of basic care that leads to profound malnutrition and other harm to nursing home residents.

We also have trained more than 1,000 federal, state and local regulators, investigators, prosecutors, patient advocates, and healthcare and emergency responders. In addition, we are working to develop an infrastructure – through State Working Groups – for coordination and continued focus of those multi-disciplinary efforts at the federal, state and local levels. Last month, we hosted a roundtable discussion with healthcare, social service, public safety, and law enforcement professionals to discuss the medical forensic aspects of elder abuse and neglect. And at the end of October, in partnership with HHS, we sponsored a symposium that showcased state and local programs that use multi-disciplinary approaches.

These programs address issues such as consumer fraud, abuse and neglect in the home, and institutional abuse and neglect. We want to bridge the historical gap between those on the front lines – who see the problems first hand – and those charged with enforcing the law.

It has been said that a society's humanity is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members. Though much has been accomplished in our efforts to protect the elderly, we have a long way to go. I commit to you that I will continue to work on this important issue. Together, we can work to protect older Americans from abuse and neglect, and to improve the quality of life for all our friends and family as they grow into retirement and beyond. I know that together we can make a difference.

## **VOLUNTARY LEAVE BANK PROGRAM**

Do you have annual leave that you will not be using this year? If so, there are many people who can use it. And you can help by donating your excess hours.

Just last year, Justice Department employees donated more than 45,000 hours of leave. Those hours helped more than 220 individuals take off from work to address personal or family member health concerns.

It's all part of the Justice Department's Voluntary Leave Bank Program, which is currently having a membership drive for leave year 2001. Any employee may join the Leave Bank during this open enrollment period, which runs until December 16, 2000. The minimum membership contribution required, (8, 12, or 16 hours), has been increased to two pay periods accrual of annual leave.

Some employees donate their hours in excess of the minimum amount one must turn over to become a member. Some contribute without joining themselves. And some donate those hours which would otherwise be subject to forfeiture.

For more information, please contact your Leave Sharing Coordinator or local Personnel office.

## **1301 NEW YORK BUILDING DEDICATED TO CRIMINAL DIVISION OFFICIAL**

He's had a distinguished career spanning nearly five decades, and now he's got a building dedicated to him.

He's John C. Keeney, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division. Mr. Keeney began his distinguished career at the Justice Department in March of 1951 with the Criminal Division.

At the official dedication of the building, located at 1301 New York Avenue, N.W., Attorney General Reno said that Keeney, "distinguished himself through his dedication, the uncompromising excellence of his work, and his unwavering sense of ethical responsibility."

Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder added, "he is one of the most respected officials in the federal law enforcement community and he has made an enduring imprint on that community, and on the federal civil service itself."

## **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH**

This year, October has once again been proclaimed National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Justice Department remains committed to raising awareness of the devastating effects of domestic violence. Domestic violence affects the workplace by leading to decreased productivity, absenteeism, increased medical costs, and an overall increased risk of violence at the workplace.

In a national survey, many victims of domestic violence reported that the violence had a direct impact on their jobs, causing them to arrive late (40%), miss work (34%), have difficulty advancing their careers (23%), and have difficulty keeping a job (20%).

Each of us can do something in our workplace and in our community to change attitudes and to support those who are being abused. If you are aware of coworkers who need help, talk to them and direct them to appropriate resources. These include the **National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (voice) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)** and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management guidebook "Responding to Domestic Violence: Where Federal Employees Can Find Help" at [www.opm.gov/workplac/html/domestic.htm](http://www.opm.gov/workplac/html/domestic.htm). DOJ employees also can call the Employee Assistance Program at 800-626-0385.

## **DOJ UNVEILS STRATEGIC PLAN, IDENTIFIES KEY GOALS**

Have you ever drawn up a list of goals for yourself and promised to meet them over a certain period? On a larger scale, that's just what the Department has done with its Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2000 to 2005.

Issued at the end of September, the Strategic Plan lays out seven important goals that the Department aims to achieve during the coming years. In meeting these goals, the plan emphasizes building partnerships, strengthening communities, and taking a down-to-earth approach to solving problems. Among the Department's goals are preventing and reducing crime and violence by assisting state, tribal, local and community-based programs.

"The Strategic Plan builds on the many accomplishments we have achieved together so far," said Attorney General Reno. "It also acknowledges that we have much to do, and new challenges to confront. I know that Department employees will continue the tradition of excellent service and, working together, will help make these important goals a reality."

The plan is available on the DOJ website at [www.usdoj.gov/jmd/mps/strategic2000\\_2005/](http://www.usdoj.gov/jmd/mps/strategic2000_2005/). A summary of the plan is also available in hard copy by e-mailing a request to [lynn.dixon2@usdoj.gov](mailto:lynn.dixon2@usdoj.gov).

## **JUSTICE OFFICIAL HONORED BY THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE**

He fights for those who have suffered in the past. He has dedicated his life to insuring that Nazi war criminals hiding in America will be brought to justice. Eli Rosenbaum, Chief of the Office of Special Investigations, was honored on October 17, 2000 at the 2000 ADL "Heroes in Blue: A Concert to Honor." The event, held at the Kennedy Center, honored members of the law enforcement community who protect Americans from crimes motivated by hatred and extremism.