

## Yolo County DA to hold annual Crime Victims' Tribute

By Democrat staff

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Supervisor Jim Provenza, right, gives a proclamation to Cynthia Islas Tuesday at the Yolo County Board of Supervisors meeting honoring April 10 through 16 as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Islas' brother, Richard Islas, was killed in 1989 by Clifford Myelle, who was denied parole earlier this year. (Katherine Jarvis/Democrat) Crime victims will be honored Friday during the fifth annual Crime Victims' Tribute, part of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

This past Sunday marked the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week in honor of victims and the advocates of victims' rights.

The Yolo County District Attorney's Office and Victim Services Division will be holding the tribute from noon to 1 p.m. at the Woodland Opera House, 340 Second St.

Friday's events will honor crime victims who have survived and persevered through their victimization and subsequent court prosecution. This year's theme is "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past" and evokes victims' past and the nation's duty to help them rebuild stronger lives.

Reisig hosted the first tribute ceremony in 2007 after he was elected.

"We talk about preserving the dignity of victims and their families," Reisig said. "The tribute ceremony is a favorite of mine because we get to honor our victims for their strength and resilience."

For victims, reshaping the future means confronting many challenges. After a crime, victims need to know what rights and resources they can count on. They may need funds to bury a loved one or pay medical bills.

The victims may also want information on the criminal justice process, their rights to be present or heard in court and to be notified about court proceedings and offenders' whereabouts. Yet many victims do not find the help they need.

For victim advocates, reshaping the future -- particularly in these financially stressed times -- means finding ways to do more with less. It means locating resources for victims and helping new victims, such as the millions harmed by financial fraud. Reshaping the future requires meeting present and emerging challenges.

Honoring the past also means recalling a time, not too many years ago, when victims had no voice in the criminal justice system -- when murder victims' families were excluded from courtrooms and assault victims paid all their own medical bills.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week honors the victims and advocates who confronted such injustices and helped produce a nationwide system of victim compensation and victims' rights. It also reminds us that failures to enforce these laws or fund programs for victims jeopardize the success of these reforms.

"Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past captures the spirit and mission of National Crime Victims' Rights Week," said Joye E. Frost, acting director of the Federal Office for Victims of Crime. "The past that we honor points to a future when all victims are respected, the laws to protect them are enforced and the resources they need are in place and accessible to them. Justice demands no less."