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### **“Voices of Victims” Receives Donation from AVCF**

Ordway, CO: The Colorado Department of Corrections, Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility hosted several, offender initiated, events to raise funds for the non-profit organization “Voices of Victims” (VOV) as part of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

For the first time, the Victims Committee of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the Association of Paroling Authorities International (APAI), the American Correctional Association (ACA), National Institute of Corrections, (NIC) and the National Association of Victim Assistance in Corrections (NAVAC), joined together on a project to promote victim awareness, rights, and post-conviction services throughout the corrections spectrum.

The synergistic endeavor between staff and offenders, hosted by Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility, offered events to raise funds for VOV. The organization is actively involved in our criminal justice system, as well as, with the Colorado Department of Corrections. They offer support groups, guidance, education, and advocacy for victims and survivors of crime. Members of this group frequently visit AVCF and other prison facilities to speak with offenders who participate in Restorative Justice and Victim Awareness classes.

Sergeant Rhonda Hesslink, who works with offenders in this program stated, “It is extremely important to allow our offender population to participate in helping support victims of crime. This is important to their growth in empathy and understanding. This is a good way for offenders to give back to those that have had their lives impacted by the same types of behaviors that led them to prison. It is important for us as staff to teach our offenders this pro-social behavior and to also support this great cause.”

The committee held three events and raised \$3,186 for donation to victims.

Staff and offenders were encouraged to participate together in the fundraising events. This is the first time the Colorado Department of Corrections has engaged in such a collaborative effort between both offenders and staff to support a common cause.

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