



## Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings all and welcome to the June issue of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter!

The SASTF's 5<sup>th</sup> year is off to a strong start, thanks to the hard work of our survivor leaders, Task Force, and working group members. Along with the latest SASTF news and information on upcoming sexual assault-related conferences and training opportunities, we include several updates on SASTF members and SASTF/PSO staff, and a special Survivor Voices submission from three of our male survivor leaders, Marcus Reese, Mikey Betancourt, and Arturo Mireles.

We also spotlight a recent episode of "Bloodline Detectives" with Nancy Grace, featuring SASTF Survivor Leader Carrie Krejci. Finally, we celebrate Project Beloved's 100th Soft Room Installation!

We greatly appreciate your ongoing support and encouragement of the SASTF as we continue our mission to transform Texas' response to sexual violence.

Here's to a safe (and not **too** hot) summer for all!

Sincerely,  
SASTF

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## New Task Force Member



**Lt. Greg Reyero**

Texas Department of Public Safety

Greg Reyero has served with the Texas Department of Public Safety since 2005. In 2010, during his time with the Texas Highway Patrol, Reyero became an integral part of the Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) program. Reyero contributed several case studies to the IPC program resulting from his traffic stops, arrests, and case reports, and was certified as an IPC

Instructor in 2014. In 2017, Reyero promoted to Crimes Against Children Sergeant in the Department's Training Operations Division Crimes Against Persons Training Unit (CAPTU), the unit that manages the IPC program, and was promoted again in 2021 to CAPTU Lieutenant. Reyero currently serves as the chair of the Department's Child Protection Team, which represents the Texas Crimes Against Children Center. Lt. Reyero has a Bachelor of Science from Texas Wesleyan University as well as being a graduate from the Northwestern University of Northwestern School of Police Staff & Command.

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## Task Force Member Spotlight: Gretchen Grigsby

**Gretchen Grigsby**

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement  
(TCOLE)

Gretchen Grigsby is the Director of Government Relations for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), a position she has held since 2014. In addition to overseeing the agency's legislative efforts, she chairs the Texas Peace Officers' Memorial Ceremony Committee and serves as TCOLE's representative on the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force. Prior



to joining TCOLE, she served in positions in the Texas Senate, Texas Department of Public Safety, and Governor's Office of Homeland Security. She is a graduate of the University of Texas with a degree in Political Communications.

Outside of work, Gretchen enjoys traveling, scuba diving, baking, and spending time with her husband and their two dogs.

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## New Survivor Liaison: Misty Biddick



We are pleased to introduce Misty Biddick, the new Survivor Liaison from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), assigned to the SASTF. In her role, Misty will provide peer support and advocacy for those impacted by sexual violence.

Misty was previously the Executive Director of Aware Central Texas, a dual domestic violence/sexual assault program located in Killeen, Texas. Misty is a passionate advocate and educator and has spent her career working with both survivors and perpetrators of Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence. Misty established the first family violence specialized caseload in Bell County, Texas, which focused on the community supervision of high-risk domestic violence offenders. Misty received her B.S. in Criminal Justice from Texas A&M Central Texas and an M.S. in Applied Criminology from Lamar University. She is in the first year of a PhD program in Criminal Justice at the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Va.

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## New SASTF Focused Working Groups

As we move into our next phase of work which deepens our focus on improving the criminal justice system's response to sexual assault, we are excited to announce the creation of two new SASTF focused working groups: the Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group and the Judicial Working Group. Both groups will hold inaugural meetings this month.

The **Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group** was created to hold focused discussions on best practices and policy recommendations for the investigation of sexual assault and other sex offenses, and to review training, information, and resources for law enforcement from the leadership perspective. This focused working group will provide insight and feedback on the following SASTF objectives:

- Advise and provide resources for educating leadership in law enforcement on the evolving complexities and dynamics of sexual assault cases;
- Develop model policies that address common challenges experienced by law enforcement officers investigating sexual assault; and
- Develop protocols or other tools to aid leadership and Field Training Officers (FTOs) in promoting a trauma-informed culture that appropriately responds to survivor needs during the investigative process.

The **Judicial Working Group** comprises judges from across Texas who have expertise and experience presiding over child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault cases. This focused working group will:

- Hold focused discussions on best practices for judges with jurisdiction over sexual assault or other sex offense cases with particular emphasis on preserving crime victims' rights and improving the experiences of survivors who are involved in the criminal and civil justice systems;
  - Gain an understanding of the nuances of child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault, as well as how trauma-informed approaches can be integrated while preserving the integrity of the judicial process; and
  - Gain an understanding of training opportunities currently available for judges and court personnel, specific to adult and child sexual assaults, and develop recommendations for additional training.
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## Survivor Voices

**WE**, as survivor leaders in our service to and as part of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivor's Taskforce, Services for Male Survivors Workgroup, wanted the opportunity to write in the June newsletter. We decided to describe what 'Becoming Whole' means by focusing on two (2) words that represented 'Becoming Whole'. The following are three different paths in our journey of healing and 'Becoming – Whole.'

**Mr. Marcus Reese**  
~ *Stretch and Heal* ~

Becoming whole again after experiencing sexual abuse is a complicated and unique journey. Having sexual abuse happen as a child is even more challenging because a child's path is still being developed.

**Stretch /streCH/verb/straighten or extend one's body or a part of one's body to its full length, typically so as to tighten one's muscles or in order to reach something. Be made or be capable of being made longer or wider without tearing or breaking.**



What I've learned and leaned into most is the ability to stretch.

In my profession as a tennis coach and player stretching is integral to a player's growth and development. In the same way I've had to stretch myself from a past of hurt and abuse to a place of being whole.

Some days that looks like advocating for victims and helping them find their voice. Other days it looks like taking mental health days that include hiking, massages, gardening and catching up with friends. The great thing about stretching is that we all can do it a little each day and be a better version of ourselves than we were the day before.

**Healing /'hēliNG/noun/ the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again.**

On the journey to become whole again, I would be remiss to not mention healing. The very mention of being a survivor of sexual abuse would imply that some level of healing is necessary.

After the closure and guilty conviction of my abuser in 2021, I was in a place of wanting to repair my life. The approach I took was to start with areas of my life that my abuser had damaged, and one by one create new memories.

An example of that is when my abuser took my love of basketball as a child and used it as a weapon of silence. She would tell me that if I kept her secret, she would take me to my first NBA game. I kept her secrets for 20 years.

Last year I purchased my own ticket to a San Antonio Spurs game. As I walked into that arena that hurt place that my abuse once occupied started to heal. One by one I will create healing where hurt used to occupy. Removing as many of the hurts and becoming a more whole version of myself along the way.



***When I'm not advocating for sexual assault survivors you can find me at a cozy coffee shop, gardening, fishing, or trying new recipes on the grill. In my profession you can find me on the tennis court as a coach and player.***

**~ Warm Regards, Marcus Reese**

Marcus Reese is the president of the Taylor Area Tennis Association. The purpose of this non-profit is to promote and grow tennis in the Taylor area regardless of socioeconomic status or age. Marcus is a certified tennis teaching professional since 2016. Achieving National rankings, he now lends

his expertise to advancing the level of play to Junior and Adults alike. Reese is also an Advocate in the fight against Child Sexual Abuse. From organizing events to raise awareness, to speaking and engaging the public on how to take a more preventive measure.

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## **Mr. Mikey Betancourt** **~ Complete and Restored ~**



The journey of healing and ‘Becoming Whole’ has been a continual process with many peaks and valleys. My journey as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse has brought me to a place of being complete and restored. It’s those moments of retrospection I become in awe of how the journey has led me to my life’s work, serving and advocating for the most vulnerable, and has supported my healing. I’m humbled and honored to share that when I look in the mirror these days, I don’t see a fragmented, sometime fearful, lost, and broken, 4-year-old little boy, yet I stand in that mirror as a strong, kind, and loving 47-year-old survivor complete and restored.

**Complete / kəm'plēt/ adjective/ having all the necessary or appropriate parts.**

I am complete in acts of love, kindness, and affection. I am complete when I share humor, jokes, and laughter. I am complete when I lend an ear and listen, share inspiration and motivational thoughts, and act as a voice for those that are momentarily silenced. I am complete when I can bring change agents together to serve children and families through identifying resources and collectively filling in gaps. My mom’s strength and love for us and for her ‘Barbies’ (great grand Twins) completes me. My village of family, friends, and colleagues complete me.

**Restored / ri-stohrd / adjective / to bring back.**

I am restored seeing the next generation of my family members build foundations of success in life, excelling in school, sports, businesses, careers, and raising their own healthy, happy families. Running, hiking, floating the river, being outdoors, enjoying nature and the goodness of people restores me. Restoration for me is seeing the beauty in imperfections in people and life. Being called and known as 'Uncle' in my family and especially being the 'Kuncle' to my precious grand twin nieces (Jocelyn and Paisley). My life's work of serving children and families who have experienced abuse and trauma restores me.

I am complete and restored in the presence of my God. I couldn't have made it this far without Him and He has plans for me (Jeremiah 29:11) and you.

The abusers in my life couldn't keep me from becoming who I'm supposed to be in this world.



***I am complete and restored  
because it's who I was made to  
be; it's who YOU were made to  
be – Complete, Restored, and  
Whole!***

**~ Humbly, Mikey Betancourt**



Mikey has served children and families for the last twenty years in various capacities at six Child Advocacy Centers in Texas and enjoys his current role as a Regional Principal with Children Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX). He loves spoiling and spending time with his family, especially his grand twins who are adorable. Mikey enjoys being active, loves running, playing sports, being outdoors, and always looking for a new experience in life.



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## Mr. Arturo Mireles ~ *Repaired and Relentless* ~

***Repaired*** /rəˈper/ *verb past tense/ fix or mend (a thing suffering from damage or a fault).*

Being repaired shows me how resilient I am. Kintsugi is a Japanese art form that takes patience, love and care as it is the process of repairing broken pottery with lacquer and gold. The vessel symbolizes our lives, the lacquer represents our support systems like family, and the gold signifies the therapies that turn the pain into power. Kintsugi art does not hide the damage, it acknowledges it and finds beauty in the resilience from the repair. The vessel becomes not only unique, but more valuable from the repair.



***Relentless*** /rəˈlen(t)ləs/ *adjective/ indicates persistence, perseverance, commitment, and fortitude.*

Being relentless is ingrained in my character from enlisting in the United States Army Infantry and serving a combat deployment to bring peace to Afghanistan during their 2014 elections. Democracy is threatened when Military Sexual Trauma is prevalent in our Military as it is a force divider because it eats at the trust of command as well as unit cohesion. When I finally stood up for myself to address the sexual harassment and sexual assault I experienced in the Army, I found that my voice matters because I learned that I'm not alone as other Infantrymen in my unit that I served with finally acknowledged their trauma as well. Being relentless gave me strength to fight for my justice by reporting to law enforcement and advocating for others.



*"Before healing others, heal yourself."*

*-Lao Tzu*



Arturo Mireles is a Combat Infantryman and Military Sexual Trauma Survivor. He volunteers his time to various organizations to amplify their voices to create change for a better world. On his off time he loves to ride motorcycles, lift weights, and loves to learn. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film and Television Production, an Associates of Arts in Business and is on his way towards earning a Bachelor of Science in Business and a Master's in Business Administration.

***We are privileged to have shared a little bit of us with you all. We hope this brings hope, light, and love to those who read.  
We want to close by challenging you!  
What are your two (2) words for Becoming/Being Whole?***

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### **Bloodline Detectives: Carrie's Courage**

We are honored to share with you that Carrie Krejci, a member of the SASTF Survivor-Centered Working Group, was recently featured in an episode of “Bloodline Detectives”, entitled [Carrie's Courage](#) (Season 4, Episode 18).

With Carrie's permission, we are sharing this with all of you, and hope that you will find some time to watch this episode.

We are privileged to work with Carrie and thank her for continuing to use her voice by sharing her remarkable story to effect positive change for survivors across Texas and beyond.

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### **Project Beloved Celebrates its 100th Soft Room Installation!**



**Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission** is a non-profit organization with a mission to “[e]ducate, advocate, and collaborate to change the conversation about sexual assault and empower survivors to find their voices.”

One of Project Beloved’s three areas of focus is installing Soft Interview Rooms at law enforcement agencies and rape crisis centers to provide a more trauma-informed environment for survivors. Soft rooms can help survivors feel physically and emotionally safer, minimize the potential for re-traumatization, and have a positive impact on a survivor’s ability to participate in the investigative interview process.

To date, Project Beloved has installed soft rooms in over 30 states and has worked with large police departments, small police departments, university police departments, Sheriff’s departments, branches of the US military, Homeland Security Investigations, district attorney’s offices, and the FBI. This past May, Project Beloved installed their 100<sup>th</sup> Room at the Tarrant County Sheriff’s Office in Fort Worth, Texas.

Thank you, SASTF member Tracy Matheson, and Project Beloved, for all you do to help Texas “do better!”

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## Special Thanks!

### Chief Derek Prestridge

Chief Derek Prestridge of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) has stepped down from the SASTF after 4 years of service. Chief Prestridge has been an integral member of the SASTF since inception, lending his law enforcement expertise, thoughtful insight, and unwavering commitment to improving Texas’ response to sexual violence.

*“With steadfast commitment, you helped train Texas law enforcement officers in a trauma-informed, person-centered response to sexual violence. By so doing, you have been instrumental in fostering a supportive environment for survivors. Your work will echo through the ages as survivors and their families continue to receive the support they need to heal and thrive,”* said Governor Abbott in Chief Prestridge’s letter of commendation.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for Derek’s service on the

Task Force and wish him all the best as he settles into his new role as Assistant Chief for DPS' Training Operations Division.



*(Left to Right: Nicole Martinez, Chief Derek Prestridge, Hillary England, Aimee Snoddy)*

## **Jordann Jezek Duran**

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Jordann Duran for her amazing contributions to the SASTF and congratulate her on her promotion to Associate Administrator for the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT)! Jordann previously served as the Program Coordinator for Trafficking and Sexual Violence Prevention Programs, providing invaluable support to both the SASTF and the CSTT. In this role, Jordann embodied what it means to be a "team player" and was always ready to take on new challenges. We will miss her positive presence and passion to serve and help others.

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## Training Opportunities

### **SASTF Webinar: Towards a Safer Texas: Combating Sexual Violence Through Prevention, Intervention, Collaboration and Policy Change**

Wednesday, July 31, 2024, from 11:30am – 1:00pm

[Registration Link](#)

### **2024 TAASA Conference: Dive into the Multiverse**

South Padre Island Convention Center  
– South Padre, Texas  
August 18 – 21, 2024

[TAASA Conference Website](#)



### **36<sup>th</sup> Annual Crimes Against Children Conference**

Sheraton Dallas Hotel – Dallas, Texas  
August 11 – 15, 2024

[Conference Website](#)

### **Texas Department of Public Safety - Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Training**

- July 10 – 11, 2024: Sugar Land, Texas
- July 15 – 16, 2024: El Paso, Texas
- July 25 – 26, 2024: Houston, Texas
- July 30 – 31, 2024: Tyler, Texas
- September 3 – 4, 2024: Athens, Texas

[Registration Link](#)