A Workshop Addressing Criminal Investigations & Prosecutions Using Technology

Presented by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Sonia Leerkamp, Prosecuting Attorney, Hamilton County, Indiana

Sonia Leerkamp has served as the elected prosecuting attorney for Hamilton County, Indiana since January 1, 1995. Having graduated from Indiana University, Bloomington, for her undergraduate degree, and I.U. Law School at Indianapolis for law school, Sonia engaged in private practice for part of her career, but then became a deputy prosecutor in 1979. She has tried numerous murder cases, as well as specializing in child abuse prosecutions. In addition, she was part of a committee of multi-disciplinary team members who helped create "Chaucie's Place, the child advocacy center for Hamilton County, Indiana. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for "Chaucie's Place" and was President of the Board for several years. Sonia currently serves on the Board of the Indiana Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (past President) and on the Ethics Committee for the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council. Sonia also serves on the Board of Visitors for the Indiana University – Purdue University at Indianapolis School of Forensic and Investigative Sciences Program and on the Board of Directors for the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy.

Rick Barretto – Founder & President, iRecord

In 2002, with help from law enforcement and a child advocacy centers, Rick Barretto created iRecord. Today, iRecord is recognized as the leading solution in North America for police and child advocacy centers to digitally record, on-demand, interviews and interrogations. The iRecord solution is a powerful combination of hi-quality video and audio recording, annotation and encoding, DVD authoring/burning, streaming media, and secure content management/distribution. iRecord is and sold and serviced by certified Resellers throughout the U.S.

Rita Johnson, Forensic Interviewer, Child Advocacy Specialist

Rita Johnson served for eight years as the Executive Director of Chaucie's Place, a child advocacy center located in Hamilton County, Indiana. In addition to her role as chief administrator and fundraiser for the center, Rita admits that her role as a forensic interviewer of child abuse victims is a "true passion." Currently, Rita works with Child Advocacy Centers nationally for Word Systems, Inc…combining her experience as an interviewer and administrator with the ever-changing world of technology.

After graduating from Ball State University with a degree in Secondary Education Rita began teaching in secondary and post-secondary classrooms until she had a family. While raising her two sons in Fishers, Indiana, Rita held various leadership positions throughout the community. Her volunteer work eventually led to a position as Program Specialist for the Hamilton County YMCA where she worked with the staff and children in the Before and After School Program.

In July of 2000, Rita undertook the challenge of opening Chaucie's Place – Hamilton County's only child advocacy center. Her education and child development background led to an interest in the interviewing done at the center. After training and participating in both regional and national trainings, she began interviewing children brought to the center.

The combination of her roles as Executive Director and as a forensic interviewer naturally led Rita to become involved with state and national organizations in the field of child abuse.

As a public speaker, she continues to champion the cause of child advocacy by addressing local agencies, schools, and universities on child-related topics. Selected from a national pool of child abuse experts, Rita has been invited to be a guest speaker at the third annual Conference on the Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Investigation of Child Abuse – With a Focus on Investigation and Prosecution Best Practices.

In addition to participating as a faculty member for the FindingWords, Indiana program, Rita is a board member for the Indiana Coalition of Child Advocacy Centers. She is a member of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) and serves on numerous councils and task forces in the areas of child abuse and domestic violence.

Rita was presented with the U.S. Attorney General's award for "Outstanding Service to Victims of Crime" by the U.S. Attorney General of Indiana in April 2005. She is also the recipient of the "Champion for Children" award, 2006 from the Cornerhouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

As Rita embarks the world of technology, her published article, "The Importance of Technology in Forensic Interviews of Children, a Forensic Interviewer's prospective" appears in the Half-A-Nation Finding Words newsletter, March 2009 and she continues to champion the cause of child abuse, speaking for APSAC in June, 2009 and Dallas, Crimes Against Children conference in August, 2009.