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CARL HARMS NAMED 2018 DISTINGUISHED VICTIM SERVICES AWARD WINNER

With compassion and commitment, Carl Harms goes above and beyond for families of slain victims during their greatest time of need. Harms' dedication as a victim specialist is well known within the Fourth Judicial Circuit, but he has now received accolades on a grander scale.

Harms was named a recipient of the 2018 Distinguished Victim Services Award, which recognizes service that goes beyond the call of duty and has an impact on the community. The awards were presented by Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi during a ceremony April 11, 2018, in Tallahassee, Fla. The ceremony took place during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Harms was one of three victim advocates in Florida to receive the prestigious distinction for his work.

"The families of crime victims go through so many different emotions and thoughts after losing a loved one. My goal has always been to be there for them however I can," said Harms. "I never chose this path to win an award, but to be recognized is a great honor and very humbling."

His work with victims includes helping craft victim impact statements that provide family members an opportunity to publicly talk about their loved ones in court. In 2017, Harms honored those who he has helped through the years by writing "Grief Diaries," a book that promotes powerful and personal impact statements by those who have experienced a loss.

While Harms has been instrumental in the lives of so many impacted by crime, his efforts stretch beyond the criminal justice system. In November 2017, Harms began a "World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims" in Florida. Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry and Orange County Mayor Theresa Jacobs issued proclamations last year naming Nov. 19 as a day of remembrance for those lost to traffic crashes.

This cause is near and dear to Harms, who lost his father as a result of a drunk driver. It is that empathy that makes him such an asset to families and the State Attorney's Office.

"Carl is the gold standard. He develops relationships with victims' families and guides them with genuine care and concern," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson. "His victim advocacy is not a job, it is a calling."