

Voices of Delaware

MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILIES SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Kristin Froehlich, David's Sister

Wilmington, DE

In 1995, my 22-year-old brother David and four of his friends were murdered in Connecticut. I was traumatized and depressed. I lost my beliefs that life was predictable and that people were trustworthy.

Initially a capital case, preparation for the trial of my brother's killer took several years. I started to pin my hopes on the trial to resolve some of my feelings. The delays were confusing and frustrating. Fortunately, a friend in my grief support group helped me understand that the trial was a separate process from the grieving and healing I needed to do. She explained that the legal process is designed to punish an offender, but not to heal victims. Her words freed me from false hope. Eventually, the state abandoned seeking the death penalty and the killer was given life without parole.

Had I waited for an execution to heal my pain, I would have been cruelly disappointed. I likely would have waited years for an execution that may never have come. During appeals, the horrible details of the crime would have been paraded over and over in the media and in court. Having been freed from that expectation, I was able to get on with the necessary grieving and healing. I got to mourn my brother's death and to celebrate his life free from the overwhelming burden of endless criminal proceedings.

Over the years many have pronounced that an execution is the way that survivors of murder will be healed. They say, "The death penalty is for the victims." That is not my experience. Grieving and healing are lifelong processes with no shortcuts.

Kristin Froehlich



Because I was no longer depending on a trial or an execution to heal my pain, I was free to focus on productive ways to heal. I volunteered at my church. I went back to school for social work and became a therapist, even working at a women's prison.

Eventually, I started working against the death penalty. I knew it didn't fit with my values. Joining others to work for positive change has helped me heal far more than a death sentence would have. I have met people who are dedicated, trustworthy, and compassionate. I learned that my own actions could make a difference.

Kristin Froehlich is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She is Board President for Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty and on the Advisory Committee for the Delaware Repeal Project. She is also a member of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation.

For more information or to become a member or donor of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation: contact Horace Knight Jr. at hknight@mvfr.org or 609-792-2147 or visit www.mvfr.org

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