

# Meet new IDVAAC Steering Committee Member Johnny Rice, II

By Tameka Davis

During the adult children's panel at the *A Journey to Healing: Finding the Path* conference, national violence prevention and intervention advocate Johnny Rice, II shared his personal experience of healing after witnessing domestic violence during childhood. Rice, whose father was a former abuser, was later able to reconcile with him once he realized that his father was able to positively transform himself and publicly acknowledged his past abusive actions. His father now is a respected family and community member that reaches out to other men through mentoring and ministry and models a lifestyle free of violence.

Currently Rice serves as director for the Office of Grants Management at the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), where he oversees funding for local and government agencies throughout Maryland that provide homelessness and transitional services, food and nutrition services, victim services (i.e., domestic violence, victims of crime, rape) and sexual assault education and prevention, and community-based, youth oriented and fatherhood services.

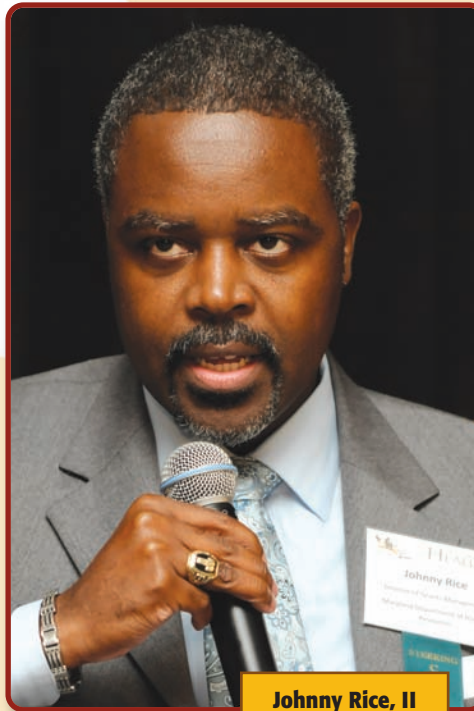
<~("last, but not least...")

Rice also serves on the Governor's Family Violence Council and the State Board of Victim Services in Maryland, which focus on domestic violence policy and legislation that is central to victim safety and offender accountability. This year Rice became a member of IDVAAC's Steering Committee. His diverse experience in the field of responsible fatherhood and human services helps aid in IDVAAC's mission of increasing awareness and understanding of efforts that are necessary to prevent, reduce and eliminate domestic violence in the African-American community.

Rice has worked in human services and family strengthening for nearly 15 years. Working as a foster care worker at the Baltimore City Department of Social Services was where Rice first gained interest in human services. "I've always been committed to positive youth development," said Rice. "I was able to see the challenges youth faced as a teen growing up in West Baltimore, and as an adult child welfare worker. I have always acknowledged barriers families faced and attempted to acquire the resources they needed to become sustaining and self-sufficient."

"I've regularly worked with fathers and families in the community throughout the years, and they have shared a lot with me," said Rice. "I often have shared with them some of my personal experiences when it's appropriate, so they can understand that I can relate

this strategic choice deprives the PUBLIC of an INDEPENDENT ACCOUNT (apart from the newsletters and other promotions or awards from friends) of funds received or used, as a non-entity (even within the UMN system — and I did look for it there years ago...), while retaining special status with federal-branch (USDOJ/OVW, at a minimum) circles and referred to as if it was an entity, thus also clouding their fiscal accountability, too.



Johnny Rice, II

to their struggle. It serves as a way to motivate people to succeed and to strengthen others."

When Rice was an adult, he recognized he had been a child who witnessed domestic violence. Rice says that it wasn't until he attended a meeting on domestic violence early in his professional career that he was able to identify his own experience with abuse. This is why Rice stresses for individuals in the field to make sure they address their own needs as much as they attempt to address others'.

## Motivating others to succeed

"Often people in the field are so focused on helping victims that they can forget to also help themselves," said Rice. "I hope to be a motivational voice to encourage individuals in victim services. Often the work can be very exhausting, and it takes a lot out of them working with abusers and victims/survivors, but I want to assist in helping keep them healthy. That's why mentoring and teaching others committed to this work is so vital."

As an addictions counselor for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Rice worked with low-income fathers and saw the challenges they faced when reconnecting with their families. This inspired him to see how he could affect change on a broad scale for the community.

During Rice's first stint at DHR as a program specialist, he began to understand the importance of public policy. "As practitioners, we support families in different ways to help create a safe and balanced society as best we can," said Rice. "I learned early on that policy often dictates the resources and parameters in which practitioners must adhere to in carrying out their work thus making it so critical. It is even more important today that we don't ignore the issue of domestic violence. If we don't deal with violence in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities a new generation of victims and perpetrators will be birthed. My focus is to work on a societal level to eradicate domestic violence and in turn contribute to the field."