Gardens of Reflection at Angel House

After three years of working behind the scenes, the new garden at Wiregrass Angel House has begun. A new place built for victims’ families to come to as a place to:

Remember — Reflect — Rebuild

This was a special project taken on by our late counselor, Joyce Miller. She had many discussions with our board president about making this a reality. The garden should be completed in the next few weeks. Dedication of the garden is scheduled for Thursday, May 17th at 10:00 a.m.
Wiregrass Angel House held its 5th Annual golf tournament on Thursday, April 12th at the Highland Oaks Golf Course in Dothan, Alabama. This is Angel House’s major fundraiser for the year. The attendance for the tournament was great. There were over 21 teams that played. We were able to raise over $45,000.00 to help victims’ families that have been affected by violence in the Wiregrass area. A great big thank you to Brandi Cole and Jay Henry for all of the work they did to make this such a great success. Thank you to the Wiregrass DA’s for all of their support as well!

1st Place Winning Team Saliba Construction
Special Thanks to: Doug Valeska, Kirke Adams, and Ben Reeves for their Gold Sponsorship
Candlelight Vigil

The Southeast Chapter of VOCAL held their 15th Annual Candlelight Vigil on Sunday, April 22nd, to commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. District Attorney, Kirke Adams, of the 33rd Judicial Circuit was the keynote speaker. A memorial slideshow was presented by Wiregrass Angel House, of victims who have been murdered, in the Wiregrass area.

Special recognition was given to the detectives that worked and solved the 30 year old cold case for the family of Ernest Russell Douglas as well as special recognition was given to Ms. Nita Hogg, retired Victim Service Officer from Houston County.

National Crime Victims’ Rights Week

In conjunction with National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, Wiregrass Angel House places crosses out to honor our loved ones lost to homicide. This year the crosses brought many visitors by to stop and remember. One of our youngest visitors was Domanique Newby (age 5) who came to remember his friend and playmate Shawn.

DONATIONS

Thank you to the following for donations to our organization. Without you our job would not be possible...

- Houston County Pre-Trial Program
- Henry County Pre-Trial Program
- Wiregrass Area United Way
- Mark Coskrey
- Michael Manring
- IBM Employees
Words of Wisdom

Comfort

Have you ever wished you could hear your loved ones voice again? Do you think it’s odd that a wife keeps her husband’s phone? Sometimes hearing that voice, “you have reached... please leave a message and I’ll get back to you,” can be so comforting and sometimes we respond with, “I love you and I miss you so very, very much.” Comfort for a few moments can get us through the day. Some of us keep every voice message from our loved one and play them over and over when we need that comfort. Some of us won’t even get a new phone because we can’t bear to let those messages go. Some of us sleep in his old shirt, wear his hat, and won’t wash the pillow he slept on; they all have the smell that gives us comfort even while longing for more time with them.

Everyone mourns in different ways, so please just listen and don’t think these things are unhealthy. Not being able to express your grief in your own way is unhealthy. There is no time line for your grief and mourning; only you know when the trauma begins to lighten somewhat.

CREP Corner

By: Don Salt

Probably the three sessions that the students get the most out of are the session on the law and the two sessions where we discuss strategies for positive change. In the law discussion, we talk about the new laws and exactly what the law says about drinking and other drug use. In the sessions on Strategies for Positive Change, we discuss stress management, alcohol and other drug refusal, communication, and anger management. Everyone picks up some ideas on how to deal with life and relationships in these two sessions. When I see the looks on the students as they are finishing up the class and hear how committed they appear to be to not making the same mistakes again, I know our time and effort are well worthwhile.

Spring
A parole hearing was held for Michelle Bankston, who was convicted of killing her husband, Joe Bankston. She only received a 25 year sentence after being convicted of murder. The District Attorney often referred to her as “The Black Widow” after shooting her husband four times while he was taking a shower.

Bankston has been up for parole many times. She will have to serve out the remainder of her sentence. She is due to be released from prison in March 2017.

Three victims, Willie James Flournoy, Theresa Ann Helms, and David Lee Bennett were all gunned down in October 1996 by Jerry Jerome Smith. Smith decided he wanted to commit a robbery and leave no witnesses. In 1998, Smith was convicted of Capitol Murder and sentenced to death. Since that time, the Court of Criminal Appeals has sent the case back now for the 2nd time. Even after three trials, in March of this year, the jury convicted Smith of Capitol Murder and recommended on a 12-0 verdict for death.

We would like to thank Judge Conaway for sentencing Smith to death once again. Hopefully the three families won’t have to endure another trial. It is so hard for loved ones to listen to facts of how their loved ones had to suffer at the hands of Jerry Jerome Smith. The families would like to thank DA Valeska for his tenacious and aggressive prosecution of this murderer.
Dale/Geneva News

A parole hearing for James Baldwin was held in April and was denied for another 5 years. Baldwin was convicted of beating Faye Anderson in a robbery of her business in 1992. He will have to serve out his entire 25 year sentence. A special thank you to DA Kirke Adams from, Faye and her children, for standing up with her at the parole hearing and making sure justice was served.

Congratulations to Bill Filmore

Congratulations to Bill Filmore for being elected to the Circuit judgeship in Dale and Geneva Counties. We know he will be great in his new position.
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Victim Contacts

Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission
Dr. Cassie Jones, Director
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www.acvcc.state.al.us

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