I was wondering what in the world I was going to write about for the March newsletter - The hostage standoff in Midland City. No other one like it in the world—ever. That was an understatement!

You have all read countless stories about what it was like for Ethan in the bunker. About the crazy man who was unstable and all the horrible things law enforcement was scared he would do. You’ve heard about the mother and how she felt. You know the great valor of Mr. Poland and how he saved so many children on the bus that day.

So I want to write about two things no one else has covered: Local law enforcement and the family.

As I heard the FBI special agent in charge state to the mother, “there are plenty of heroes to go around” when referring to local law enforcement. And I couldn’t agree more.

When anything bad happens in the Wiregrass area, ALL law enforcement stop what they’re doing and immediately call to ask, “What can I do to help you?”

Houston County Sheriff’s Office and the Dothan Police Department were partners from the beginning with Dale County Sheriff’s Office and the Midland City Police Department, asking, “What can I do to help you?” No turf wars. No personalities.

(continued on page 4)
**Director’s Note**

In the past two months we have seen so much tragedy in the Wiregrass area, first with the murder of Chuck Poland and the kidnapping of 5 year old Ethan Gilman. Then the double murder of Krista Kowalsky Stone and her 7 year old son, Zachary, both killed in Huntsville. All the family members in each of the above mentioned cases need special daily prayer from each of you reading this article. It is only prayer that will be able to sustain them through this horrific time and it is only the Lord who will be able to see them through. So as you are going through your busy time, as we all are, please take a minute every day and thank God you are not walking in their shoes and ask Him to be with Mrs. Poland and her children, and Krista’s parents and siblings, as well as her two surviving children, to help them through the most significant tragedy they will ever endure.

**National Crime Victim’s Rights Week**

To commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, Wiregrass Angel House, along with Southeast VOCAL, are accepting nominations for those professionals that have been outstanding in their field. If you are interested in nominating someone in any of the following categories: law enforcement officer, victims service officer, prosecutor, or the Miriam Shehane award for working with victims go to our website and fill out a nomination form. **Deadline for nominations is March 25th**

The 11th Annual Governor’s conference for law enforcement training will be held at the Montgomery Renaissance and Convention Center on April 23rd. If you are interested in attending please contact the Wiregrass Angel House office for a registration packet. Some scholarships are being offered to pay for registration fees.

Shelly Linderman
Miss Angel Queens

The queens crowned were: Baby Miss Aisley Harrison, Tiny Miss Emma Duncan, Future Little Miss Hayden Harris, Little Miss AnnaBelle Thompson, Petite Miss Emily Edwards, Junior Miss Haylee Williams, Teen Miss Jasia Guice, Miss Angel Jessica Bennett, Miss Angel Cover Girl Cy’niyah Snell, Miss Angel Viewers’ Choice Marlie Johnson, and Miss Angel Queen of Queens Reagan Greenwood

This year’s Miss Angel pageant was held February 10th at the Dothan Opera House. This was a day of interviews, casual wear competition and evening gown competition to find our next representatives. We crowned eleven new queens who will surely have their work cut out for them. In addition to riding in the National Peanut Festival Parade, these girls will spend their year promoting the Wiregrass Angel House at various community and charity events. The pageant raised $2140 and the new Queen's presented Angel House with a check recently!

There was a special moment at this year's pageant. Our new Miss Angel, Jessica Bennett, was overjoyed to represent the organization that she has benefited from personally. Her father, Ronnie Holman, was a murder victim and Wiregrass Angel House was there for her family. This is a cause near and dear to her heart, and we look forward to working together all year!

Pictured: Miss Angel Queen of Queens Reagan Greenwood, Miss Angel Cover Girl Cy’niyah Snell, Future Little Miss Angel Hayden Harris, Petite Miss Angel Emily Edwards, Junior Miss Angel Haylee Williams, Teen Miss Angel Jasia Guice, and Miss Angel Jessica Bennett.
(Local Law Enforcement continued from page 1)

It was all about one little boy alone in a bunker with a mean, crazy old man. All of these grown men knew that. And this is why it was a success. Yes- the FBI, of course, was the one who extracted Ethan. But without all of the local law enforcement working hand in hand, it could have been a much different outcome.

Sheriff Wally Olson is a man who took on the daunting responsibility of this entire situation with determination and purpose and that was to retrieve Ethan unharmed. Because of the personality and heart that Sheriff Olson has—this is what made the difference in the outcome.

DA Kirke Adams—I call him master negotiator. He worked many magical deals throughout this entire process. Kirke never lost focus of what the objective was – to bring Ethan home. He also assisted in making sure that all funds collected will go into an account that will only be used for Ethan’s needs.

These two men are what exemplify what ordinary men can do in extraordinary situations. Showing the state, nation, and world what honor, respect, and a man’s word truly means.

The family—There is not enough paper to write about this wonderful bunch of folks. Granny, Pops, Camren, Aunt Vickie, Aunt Tina, Uncle Burl, Aunt Deb, Cousin Sara. All of them were there from the moment they received word that Ethan had been taken. They stopped their everyday life to come and support Ethan’s mother through this horrible ordeal. The daily grind became so overwhelming and emotionally heavy as one day would go into the next. Not knowing each day how Ethan was doing. Not receiving any information on what was going on in his daily routine in the bunker was excruciating for the entire family. But this family overcame it and pulled together. They leaned on each other. I saw them laugh together, cry together, fuss together. But the key word—together.

You see, each one of them had one goal in mind. Bring Ethan home safe. I am so honored to have been a part of this family’s life for two weeks. I was there in the depths of despair when they first found out, to the great joys of laughter when they were told he had been rescued.

Law enforcement are the heroes but without the support of the family, Ethan’s mother would not have been able to hold it together through this time.
VSO’s

Victim Service Officers - Have you ever wondered what that means? Have you ever heard the phrase? Have you ever had to work with one? A Victim Service Officer is someone that works for the district attorney or US attorney to assist victims of crime. It is a tiring and taxing position.

Well, most are like sour patch kids—Sweet or sour. The VSO’s that worked with this family were definitely sweet.

Ms. Amarylis Benefield has the title VSO for Dale and Geneva County. But she is much more than that. From the time this event happened, Amarylis was on the scene trying to attain help for the families, Mr. Poland’s family as well as Ethan’s. She contacted Wiregrass Angel House and asked if we would assist. Amarylis knew she would have to be the liaison between law enforcement and the family. She sometimes has to walk a very small tight rope between law enforcement and victims, as each side might want to push her off when they’re angry. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet this family.

A special thank you to Houston County DA, Doug Valeska, for allowing three of his officers to come and assist with the family during this ordeal. They were so much comfort to the family when they needed it. Brandi Cole, Terri Owens, and Paula Lindenmuth stayed late into most nights and even worked on the weekend without being asked or compensated. They did it because they care.

So, thank you all for what you do for victims. Because that’s what it’s all about. Taking care of the victims.

S.E. VOCAL Chapter News

Southeast Vocal had their regular support group meeting February 19th. Dinner was served. They will be having their annual candlelight vigil to commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, on Sunday, April 21st at First Presbyterian Church located on Hwy 84 (next to Walgreens). Featured guest speaker is Sheriff Wally Olson.

They will be having a balloon release after the ceremony. Anyone wanting to place a picture in the memorial slide show or a tribute to their loved one in the program, please email to Beckie Schuler becca82380@live.com by April 1st.

The next support group meeting will be held Tuesday night at 6 p.m. March 19th at Wiregrass Angel House.

Donations

Wiregrass United Way
Houston County DA’s Office
Houston County Pre-Trial
Henry County Pre-Trial / Henry County Commission
IBM Employees
United Way of Greater Philadelphia & SNJ
Angel Queen Pageant

Memorial for: Joseph Hendley
by N. David Eubank
It has been very busy for Henry and Houston Counties for the first part of 2013. Many cases have come up for parole in which the DA’s office has protested in person with the victims and/or their family members. It makes a huge difference for prosecutors to attend and stand up for the victims when the parole board is deciding a case. If your case is coming up for parole, please give us a call and we will assist you in any way possible to assure the offender stays locked up where he belongs.

Welborn Pate Johnson was convicted of murder and had only been in a few years. He was being considered for parole before his actual time due to a clerical error. This error was caught by the DA’s office and Inmate Johnson won’t be up for parole for another 10 years.

Wayne Yeomans was convicted of murder and had received a Life sentence in 1986. We all understand in Alabama, Life doesn’t mean Life. He was up for parole and was denied for 3 years.

Other Cases - Bobby Lynn Smith pled guilty to 16 counts of rape and was sentenced to 630 years by Judge Mike Conaway. Good job Judge Conaway! He can never hurt another child.

A status hearing for the murderer, Ryan Peterson will be held on March 11th. He is accused of the triple slaying of Cameron Eubanks, Rocky Robins, and Tiffani Grissett last August.

Patricia Johnson, mother of Milton Jones, who was murdered 2011, was able to meet with DA Valeska to discuss her son’s case. She was able to receive some solace in reference to the case and have many questions answered.
Busy doesn’t describe the month Dale and Geneva County DA Kirke Adams has endured; not to mention his VSO-Amarylis Benefield; as well as Sheriff Wally Olson. Being a part of behind the scenes during the kidnapping and standoff of Ethan has made me appreciate how difficult this time was for each of the above mentioned. So much goes on the general public doesn’t hear about. I, for one, am glad I don’t work in any of their positions. I don’t think I could have kept my cool as they did.

Judge PB McLauchlin officially retired in February; although he has been appointed by AOC to hear certain cases across Alabama, when called upon. Judge McLauchlin has been a great testament to the bench since 1976. He has always tried to weigh both sides when listening to a case. Victims will miss Judge McLauchlin, but we know his successor, Judge Bill Filmore will try to show the same type of fairness to both sides and compassion for victims.

Special congratulations to Investigator Harvey Mathis for becoming the new Chief of Police for the city of Daleville. Mathis is a man with strong convictions and passion for upholding the law; as well as compassion for victims of violent crime.

Casey Owens was sentenced to 20 years in prison for killing Bobby Crews in a vehicular homicide. Owens was nearly three times the legal limit when driving his vehicle and hitting the back of an 18 wheeler. He was driving over 80 miles an hour. Owens and Crews were cousins. A judge will hear the case next month to decide if Owens will receive a split sentence or serve entire amount of time in state prison.

Howard Reese was sentenced to twenty-two years after pleading guilty to robbing the Cannon Oil station at knifepoint and stealing the clerk’s vehicle by Judge Ken Quattlebaum.

Memory Pavers

Wiregrass Angel House has begun a new project endeavor. We are beginning to start our memory pavers. This is a walkway that will be placed under our newly constructed arbor. Each paver will be in memory or in honor of a loved one. This is not a fundraiser, we will only be charging for the price of the paver. If you are interested in having a paver in memory or honor of your loved one, please contact the Wiregrass Angel House office.
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Victim Contacts

Governor Robert Bentley
State Capitol
Montgomery, AL 35130
Taylor Vice, Director
Constituent Services
(334).242.7100
1.800.591.4217

Department of Corrections
Kim T. Thomas, Commissioner
P.O. Box 301501
301 South Ripley St.
Montgomery, AL 36310
(334).353.3871
www.doc.state.al.us
State inmate parole info.
1.888.726.9799, Option 4

Victim Contacts

Alabama Crime Victims Compensation
Commission
Dr. Cassie Jones, Director
P.O. Box 231267
Montgomery, AL 36123
1.800.541.9388
www.acvcc.state.al.us

Attorney General’s Office of Victim Assistance
501 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130
Patricia S. DeBortoli
Victim Services Director
(334).242.7300
1.800.626.7676
www.ago.state.al.us

State of Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles
Cynthia Dillard, Director
P.O. Box 302405
Montgomery, AL 36130
VSO Debra Bonds
(334).242.8050
Fax (334).353.7701
www.paroles.state.al.us