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National Crime Victim’s Rights Month

Miss Angel Queen of Queens, Reagan Greenwood, and Miss Angel, Jessica Bennett, take a moment to remember those loved ones murdered in our community. Miss Angel, Jessica Bennett knows this loss first hand as her father was murdered eleven years ago. The crosses the queens are in front of are set out each April to bring awareness of violence in the Wiregrass. The crosses will be out throughout the month of April.

Look inside for more information on the other events sponsored by Wiregrass Angel House in conjunction with National crime Victim’s Rights Week, April 21-27, 2013
SE VOCAL Chapter Vigil

Shelly Linderman comforts Ben McCain and Betty Pugh as they remember her son, Willie David Pugh, murdered January 2012

Remembered, not forgotten! This year’s vigil was held at First Presbyterian Church of Dothan, Sunday, April 21st. Candles were lit, balloons were released, and prayers were said.

Kirke Adams, the district attorney for Dale and Geneva counties, introduced the keynote speaker at the memorial service as a man who started out his law enforcement career as a jailer and then worked his way up to become Dale County Sheriff - Wally Olson. Sheriff Olson spoke on the crisis in Midland City and the kidnapping of Ethan Gilman. He spoke from his heart on how this incident had affected him personally. He also emphasized how working well with other law enforcement agencies in the area was imperative to making this situation have a successful outcome. His speech was very meaningful to those in the crowd. Sheriff Olson recognized four men for their work as local law enforcement officers including Houston County Sheriff’s Chief Deputy Donald Valenza, Houston County Sheriff’s Lt. Bill Rafferty, Dothan Police Lt. Will Benny and Dothan Police Sgt. Will Glover.

As part of the memorial service District Attorney Doug Valeska presented several awards, including the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, which went to Houston County Sheriff’s Lt. Bill Rafferty. D.A. Valeska also presented the Victim Service Officer of the year award to Amarylis Benefield, who serves Dale and Geneva Counties. Awards were also presented to Cathey Berardi - Prosecutor of the year, Pat Jones –The Miriam Shehane Award, and Shelly Linderman for her work with the victims in the Midland City hostage crisis.

Pictured left to right - Pat Jones, Dale/Geneva County D.A. Kirke Adams, Cathey Berardi, Houston/Henry County D.A. Doug Valeska, Amarylis Benefield, Lt. Bill Rafferty, and Sheriff Wally Olson
VOCAL’s State Vigil

Wiregrass Angel House and the 20th Judicial Circuit D.A.’s office sponsored VOCAL’s state wide vigil on Friday, April 26th, in Montgomery. Shelly Linderman prepared a PowerPoint memorial honoring over 220 murder victims throughout the state. The vigil was held outside the Attorney General’s office. Doug Valeska was to be the keynote speaker. However, a family situation had called him away. Sam Clenney, Assistant District Attorney in Henry County, read a prepared speech by Mr. Valeska. As candles were lit each family came to state who they were there remembering; bag pipes played Amazing Grace. As the balloons were released-taps could be heard as each family watched their balloons disappear in the sky. It was a very somber but healing time.

Pictures from 11th Annual Governor’s Conference

Mike Coker

D.A. Kirke Adams, Sheriff Wally Olson, Governor Bentley
Angel House and VOCAL held their 11th Annual Governor’s Conference Tuesday, April 23rd in Montgomery, AL.

With nearly 200 in attendance law enforcement officers, victims service officers, judges, court referral officers, and prosecutors all listened as Mike Coker from Portsmouth, Virginia talked about Domestic Violence and Homicide. The afternoon session featured Dale County Sheriff Wally Olson, FBI Agent Steve Sorrells, of Mobile and Alabama State Trooper Kevin Cook from Dothan. Together they presented “A little Boy Held Hostage” and what law enforcement agencies learned from that crisis.

An awards luncheon was held at noon where Governor Robert Bentley presented the following awards.

Victim Service Officer of the Year – Mitzie Wheat of the Calera Police Department
Prosecutor of the Year- Donald Valeska of the US Attorney’s Office
Law Enforcement Officer of the Year – Sheriff Wally Olson of Dale County
The Humanitarian Award – Mr. Charles Poland, accepted by Lydia and Eddie Hancock.
The Miriam Shehane Award – Richard Humphry of the Foley Police Department

Also pictured are Miss Angel Jessica Bennett, Governor Robert Bentley and Teen Miss Jasia Guice

In the 11 years of the conference the Humanitarian award has only been given once. This year the Humanitarian Award was presented to Lydia and Eddie Hancock in recognition of the selfless gift their father, Mr. Charles Poland, gave on January 29, 2013 when he laid down his life for the students on his bus.

Special thanks to everyone who participated in the nomination process, all attendees, speakers, and workers. Together we had a very successful and educational event.
**Memory Pavers**

Wiregrass Angel House has started purchasing our memory pavers. These pavers will be placed under a newly constructed arbor. Each paver will be in memory or in honor of a loved one. This is not a fundraiser; we are only charging the price of the paver - $30. If you are interested in having a paver in memory of your loved one, please contact the Wiregrass Angel House office.

### Event to bring awareness of Wiregrass Angel House to the Tri-state area

Thank you Wendy Jay for planning this benefit and selecting WAH as its partner.

**S.E. VOCAL Chapter News**

The next support group meeting will be held Tuesday night at 6 p.m. May 21st at Wiregrass Angel House.

**Donations**

- Wiregrass United Way
- Houston County D.A.’s Office
- Houston County Pre-Trial
- Henry County Pre-Trial
- Fort Rucker’s Thrift Store-Melinda Reese
- IBM Employees
- Target Employees
- UPS Employees

**In Kind Donations:**

- Stokes Floor Covering
- Diana Waller

Special thanks to Mr. Wayne Williams for the new dishwasher he purchased for Angel House. It is installed and is a huge help to us!

*Board member Tony Looker installing the dishwasher.*
Words of Wisdom

Fear of the Unknown

When a person goes through a tragedy or crisis they are left to deal with many changes. Personal, financial, family dynamics and mental battles to name a few. All of these areas become uncharted areas; places you haven’t been before. These new uncharted areas become a cause for concern. It has been labeled the fear of the unknown. Everyone experiences this fear on some level.

Fear is a strong emotion. It has the power to immobilize you. – to cause you to do nothing. When tragedy or crisis strikes it’s best to wait before making life changing decisions. However, not doing anything because of fear is something different. A wise friend once asked me, “What’s the worst thing that could happen if you stepped into those uncharted areas?”. Those words help me to face the unknown. Putting a “worst” face on it means we are more prepared to tackle those uncharted areas because we have faced them mentally. Another thing that happens is it’s usually not as bad as the “worst thing that could happen”. Each time we face an unknown, fear loses some of its power on us.

In summary facing our fears mentally before we tackle them physically loosens the power of the fear of the unknown because we have already visited that particular fear. Also by putting the “worst possible” face on it we have already faced the worst, which opens the door for easier acceptance of the reality that awaits us.
**Houston/Henry County News**

Virginia Beard had a sentencing hearing April 18th on her grandson’s case. Kevin Blake Kelly was killed by Ladarius Walker, in 2011. Mrs. Beard called the office prior to the hearing to make sure the family could wear pins into the courtroom with Kevin’s picture, his birthdate and death date. Mrs. Beard and her daughter exercised their victim’s rights by speaking at the hearing. After they spoke Judge Moulton sentenced him to 10 years, no probation, no parole.

**Dale and Geneva County News**

Dale County Sheriff Wally Olson said he went to the 11th Annual Governor’s Conference in Montgomery expecting to speak a little about his county’s involvement in a recent hostage standoff.

What he wasn’t expecting was the organizations’ top Officer of the Year Award for his efforts to lead his department through both the January hostage incident and his overall law enforcement leadership throughout the year.

Olson’s guidance to his department and several other agencies have landed him multiple speaking engagements at training sessions throughout the country.

**Barbour/ Bullock County News**

On Wednesday, April 3rd, a Eufaula jury returned a guilty verdict against James Brandon Ward, age 26 of Level Plains, AL, for the murder of Marvin Kurt Nation on October 8, 2011.

After a two day trial, the jury deliberated approximately 30 minutes before returning the verdict. District Attorney Ben C. Reeves, Jr., who prosecuted the case, said “I am very pleased with the guilty verdict. The ladies and gentlemen of the jury did a great job of listening closely to all the evidence presented and returned a verdict that gave justice to Mr. Nation’s family.”

Circuit Judge Burt Smithart will sentence Brandon Ward on May 8th. Reeves said he will ask the Judge to impose a Life sentence.