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Director's Note

It's already 2014.

Beginning this New Year is the legislative session. It starts early this year. Tuesday, January 14th will be the first day of the session. Two pre-filed bills that might interest some of you are HB14 sponsored by Representative Hurst. This bill will make it mandatory for sex offenders over the age of 21 who offended against a child under the age of 12, to be surgically castrated prior to release from the Department of Corrections, at the expense of the offender.

Also, SB2 sponsored by Senator Scofield. This bill would make it a capital offense for a defendant who murdered a person that had a protection order issued against the defendant at the time of the offense.

These are just two of the bills that have been pre-filed that affect victims across the state of Alabama. Many others will be filed once the session begins. It is our duty and responsibility as citizens and fellow victims, to know what bills are being introduced that might affect us in a positive or negative way.

You can look up all pre-filed bills as well as listen to the legislative sessions at www.legislature.state.al.us. You can also call us at 866-31-VOCAL.

If we do not get involved then we only have ourselves to blame when bills are voted into law that would adversely affect the victims' rights movement in our state.

Shelly Linderman

Christmas Open House

Wiregrass Angel House's Christmas open house was held Wednesday, December 11th. Throughout the year so many in the criminal justice system are working to make sure that victims and their families are getting justice. We like to take this time of year to say thank you by preparing goodies as a labor of love and appreciation.

It was wonderful to see all the local law enforcement officers, prosecutors and staff from the area DA's offices, the judges, and most importantly our victim's family members.

This time of year is hard on so many and it was nice to see lots of smiling faces enjoying the food, fun, and fellowship.



Words of Wisdom

Have you ever wondered if the rituals you perform to try and stay connected to your deceased loved one is normal? Do you call their cell phone just to hear their voicemail because you are scared you will forget how their voice sounded? Do you text message their phone, knowing they won't receive the message? Do you keep and maintain their clothing and wear their clothing to feel closer to them? Do you keep their room the same as when they left? Do you speak to people all the time of you loved one for fear people will forget them? Is all of this normal? Is any of it normal?

There is nothing normal in losing a loved one; especially to murder. And no two people grieve the same. Not even in the same family. There is no standardized approach to losing a loved one. The only thing that is a common thread is feeling like your losing your mind.

But you're not. How you deal with the murder of your loved one is personal and private and NO ONE should judge your process of trying to heal.



Miss Angel Pageant will be held Sunday, February 9th. This is a fundraiser for Wiregrass Angel House. Cash scholarships will be awarded.

Please contact Mrs. Ashley Thomas for information at: 401-855-5488 or ashandmikethomas@hotmail.com.

Donations

Rodney and Shirley Faulk
Henry County Pre-Trial
Houston County DA Office
Houston County Pre-Trial
IBM Employees
Target Employees
UPS Employees
Wiregrass United Way



Houston/Henry County News

There are eight capital murder cases pending in Houston County.

No capital murder cases were tried in 2013. Some of the cases date back to 2006.

- Marcus Rivers is accused of murdering Patrick Dixon. He is scheduled to be tried in front of Judge Michael Conaway in February.
- Kharon Davis is accused of murdering Pete Reaves in 2007. He has a hearing set in March to discuss the case, in front of Judge Kevin Moulton.
- Gregory Lawton is accused of murdering Milton Jones. He is scheduled for trial in front of Judge Butch Binford.
- Nathaniel Dennis, is accused of robbing and murdering Earnest Douglas in 1982, but was not arrested until 2012, is set to go to trial some time in 2015.
- Justice Knight and Antwan Wingard are accused of murdering Jarvis Daffin in 2012. Knight is set to be tried in front of Brad Mendheim. No date has been set at this time. Wingard is set to be tried in March 2014 in front of Judge Larry Anderson.
- Ryan Peterson is accused of murdering Cameron Eubanks, Tiffani Grissett, and Rocky Robins in August 2012. His case is tentatively set for May 2014 in front of Judge Brad Mendheim.
- Michael Tharp is accused of murdering his step-father, Joseph Hendley in December 2012. This case is set to be tried in front of Judge Kevin Moulton. No trial date has been set at this time.

The waiting for justice for each of the families of loved ones murdered is excruciating. Each time a date is set and then postponed rips the heart of the loved ones again. The court systems in Alabama have been severely hampered due to budget cuts in the past five years and that is some of the reasoning for the delays. We hope and pray this year will be the year where most of the capital cases will be cleared off the books so the loved ones of these families can pick up the pieces and begin the healing process.

We would like to welcome the newest victim service officer to the Houston County DA's office, Ms. Brooke Lee. She has joined the office with long time service providers, Brandi Turner, Kimberly Humphrey, Marcia Ethridge (Henry County), and Ella Johnson (Henry County). We appreciate the victim service officers in each of our counties. They have very hard jobs but they all want to reach out and assist victims when needed.

Spotlight on one of the unsolved homicides in Houston County

The Houston County DA as well as the Dothan Police Department want the public to know the unsolved murders in our area are not forgotten. A reward has been posted for each of them. Both agencies realize how important it is for the families to know who murdered their loved one.

Cynthia Gail Wilson was reported missing by her husband on September 7, 1999. She was found on East Burdeshaw Street and Delvechio Lane on October 8th. Her body was partially wrapped in a blanket. If you know anything about this case please call Crime stoppers or the Dothan Police Department.

Southeast VOCAL

Southeast VOCAL once again placed the Memorial Christmas tree at the Houston County courthouse with pictures of loved ones displayed. A big thank you to the Houston and Henry County DA's offices for their assistance in placing the tree as well as all of their hard work assuring our meetings are supported each month. The staff is always on hand to answer questions about cases and about the justice system.

Our next support group meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 21st at 6 p.m. Dinner will be provided.

THE BEST
WAY OUT
IS ALWAYS
THROUGH

-ROBERT FROST-

Dale and Geneva County News



DA Kirke Adams, SAC Stephen Richardson, Doug Astralaga, and Sheriff Wally Olson



Friday December 13th, the Dale and Geneva County DA's office held their 5th annual law enforcement conference in Geneva. 250 attended representing 55 different agencies. Barry Matson with the office of prosecution services presented the new gun law. Bill Lisenby with the Atty. Gen.'s office gave an update on new case law. Stephen Richardson, Sheriff Wally Olson, and Doug Astralaga presented the Midland city hostage crisis. Steaks were donated by Sysco Foods of Geneva and were cooked by Geneva chief of police Frankie Lindsey. Most of the attendees declared this particular seminar the best they had attended. The conference was made up of law-enforcement, prosecutors and state probation and parole officers.

Barbour County News

December 18th, a preliminary hearing was held in Clayton for defendant, Noah Bunnell. He is accused of murdering his step-mother, Jackie Bunnell. His motive was greed. The defense attorney requested a bond reduction and it was denied. Judge Brad Mendheim, Houston County Circuit Judge, presided over the hearing as the sitting judge had a conflict with one of the defense attorneys. Judge Burt Smithart will preside over the case once it goes to trial. Please continue to keep her daughter, Hillary and her two grandchildren in your prayers as they are still having a very difficult time.

January 1, 2014

Little Known Facts

Did you know that a district or circuit judge can bring some defendants back to court a re-sentence them to probation after he has sentenced them to be incarcerated? Most district attorneys relentlessly fight to stop this process, but there are judges in Alabama who re-sentence defendants, even ones that have committed violent crimes.

This is the law in the Code of Alabama: Circuit courts and district courts, subject to the provisions and conditions hereinafter provided, may suspend execution of sentence and place on probation any person convicted of a crime in any court exercising criminal jurisdiction. The court shall have no power to suspend the execution of sentence imposed upon any person who has been found guilty and whose punishment is fixed at death or imprisonment in the penitentiary for more than 15 years. Except as provided in the preceding sentence, the court, after a plea of guilty, after the returning of a verdict of guilty by the jury or after the entry of a judgment of guilty by the court, may suspend execution of sentence and place the defendant on probation, or may impose a fine within the limits fixed by law and also place the defendant on probation. Code-15-22-50.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

This year National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be held earlier than usual.

It is being commemorated April 6-12th.

Please note there is a nomination form in your newsletter. Please take a moment and fill out. You can make copies for multiple nominations if you wish.

Our 12 Annual Governor's Conference for Law Enforcement Training will be held in Montgomery at the Montgomery Renaissance Tuesday, April 8th. Please mark your calendars to attend.

Wiregrass Angel House

January 1, 2014

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Victim Contacts

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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

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

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

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