Director’s Note

National Crime Victims’ Rights Week will be held early this year. It is scheduled April 6th-12th. This year’s theme is “Restoring the Justice”. If you have never been affected by a robbery, burglary, rape, child abuse, domestic violence, or homicide then this week wouldn’t mean anything to you.

If you have been a victim of a crime and you have meandered through the criminal justice system, you have realized there is very little justice for victims in the criminal justice system. The system has always been set up to assure the rights of the offender are protected and the victims and/or their families are often an afterthought. In 1984 the victim rights laws came into existence to make it better for victims in Alabama.

Here are some of those rights given to victims:

1. The right to give a victim’s impact statement at sentencing.
2. The right to sit at the prosecutor’s table during the trial.
3. The right to be notified by the Parole board and given the opportunity to speak against the inmate’s early release.
4. The right to be notified of every criminal court proceeding such as bond hearings, status hearings, and trial, except the 72 hour hearing.
5. The right to file for compensation for injuries due to the crime.

These are just a few of the many laws passed for victims. There are still prosecutors in Alabama who do not abide by these laws and do not acknowledge they exist. It is wonderful we have district attorneys in the Wiregrass such as Kirke Adams, Tom Anderson, Doug Valeska, and Ben Reeves who assure the victims they have rights and willingly works with them to make sure they are not forgotten.

Shelly Linderman
Miss Angel’s 2014

Baby Miss Angel Khloe Kennedy, Tiny Miss Angel Mary Kate Cook, Future Little Miss Angel Alayna Buie, Little Miss Angel Kennedy Hussey, Petite Miss Angel Lexie Davis, Junior Miss Angel Isabella Flowers, Teen Miss Angel Mackenzie Holley, Miss Angel Marley Jacobs, Ms Angel Briana Morgan, Miss Angel Princess Kerissa Justice, Miss Angel Cover Girl Madilynn Conner and Miss Angel Queen of Queens Emily Edwards

This year’s Miss Angel pageant was held February 9th 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.
Prayers for the Markoff Family

Christian was born in Dale County and lived in Ozark his entire life. He was a senior at Carroll High School where he was in the Art Club. He was an aspiring artist, a rapper, and a comedian and everybody's clown and the sunshine of their lives. His sisters adored him. He was the best big brother and son anyone could ask for. Christian attended First United Methodist Church in Ozark. He was only 17 years old.

He was murdered Sunday, February 2\textsuperscript{nd} right down the street from his home in Ozark. Please keep his family in your prayers.

Honoring Their Mother

The 4th Anniversary of the murder of Grace Bridges is fast approaching on March 17th. Grace Bridges was working in her family owned furniture store, when an unknown assailant came in and shot her to death. The motive was money.

Four years the family holds on to hope this case will be solved. Mrs. Bridges left behind four daughters who loved her dearly. They are a very close knit family that wants to show honor to their mother.

To observe this solemn occasion, the family, along with the police department, and the Wiregrass Angel House are holding a tree planting remembrance ceremony in memory of Mrs. Bridges.

This event begins at 11 a.m. on Monday, March 17\textsuperscript{th} in the garden at Wiregrass Angel House, 105 North Bell Street, Dothan, Alabama.

Everyone is welcome to attend.
Anniversary
Dale County Hostage Crisis

January 29th will be in the hearts and minds of most citizens in the Wiregrass area but especially in the minds of the Poland and Gilman families. On February 5th, a ceremony was held to remember the sacrifice Mr. Charles Poland made on that fateful day when Jimmy Lee Dykes decided to kidnap school children to make some perverted point. The six days of Ethan being held hostage was an extremely trying time for his entire family. The ceremony was a thoughtful gesture to those who decided to honor such a wonderful man and such a courageous little boy. Senator Harri-Anne Smith and Representative Steve Clouse had a resolution drawn to have a portion of highway 231 renamed in memory of Charles Poland, Jr. This was so meaningful to the family. But remember the Poland family deals with the loss of their husband, father, and grandfather on a daily basis. Their level of grief is monumental. So when you drive down 231 and you see the sign renaming the highway, take a minute and pray for the Poland family. Remember they aren’t just sad on January 29th, they are learning how to work through this ordeal and are heartbroken every day of the year. So take time to sit down and send them a card to let them know they are remembered more than just one day a year. It would mean the world to them.

Donations

Henry County Pre-Trial
Houston County Pre-Trial
IBM Employees
Target Employees
United Way of Greatere Philadelphia & SNJ
UPS Employees
Wiregrass United Way

Thank you very much.
Houston/Henry County News

A Status Hearing regarding Gregory Lawton was held in January. He is accused of murdering Milton Jones in August 2011. The defense attorneys are trying to delay the trial once again. Another hearing for the same case was held March 3rd. The judge has delayed the pre-trial hearings until August but has set a firm trial date in October. The family will have been waiting over three years by the time this goes to trial. We hope justice will prevail for an October trial date.

The DA’s office attended a parole hearing for Willie McCray who was sentenced to Life in prison for the murder of Michael Scott, during the robbery of a convenience store. He was originally charged with Capital Murder but the jury found him guilty of the lesser included charge of felony murder. He was denied parole and his next parole hearing date is in five years.

Southeast VOCAL news

Southeast Vocal had their regular support group meeting February 18th. Dinner was served.

They will be having their annual candlelight vigil to commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, on Sunday, April 6th at First Presbyterian Church located on Hwy 84 (next to Walgreens). 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 contact Beckie Schuler at (334)-791-3969.

The next support group meeting will be held Tuesday night at 6 p.m. March 18th at Wiregrass Angel House.