Director’s Note

National Crime Victims’ Rights Week was held April 6th-12th. This year’s theme was “Restoring the Justice”. There were many candlelight vigils held across the State of Alabama to commemorate this event. A letter to the editor was written to remind the citizens of the Wiregrass how important it is to victims’ and/or their families of justice in the judicial system. The editorial was also written in response to this idea of justice in the criminal justice system. Hats off to, Bill Perkins, the editor of the Dothan Eagle for first and foremost recognizing the plight of victims and acknowledging the pain they and their families often endure waiting for justice. Here is the editorial for those who missed it.

Editorial: Remember crime victims

Among today’s letters to the editor is a message from Shelly Linderman of Wiregrass Angel House, who reminds us that we’re in the middle of a week that President Ronald Reagan first marked as National Crime Victims Rights Week to bring awareness to the plight of victims, particularly the families of murder victims.

This year’s theme is “Restoring the Balance of Justice,” a concept that raises awareness of the limbo suffered by those whose loved ones’ murders have gone unsolved or unadjudicated. It’s difficult for those who haven’t lived through such torment to understand these circumstances derails the traditional Elizabeth Kübler-Ross trajectory of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. However, events such as last Sunday’s candlelight vigil hosted by the Southeast Alabama Victims of Crime and Leniency help inform and explain, and help victims’ families heal.

More can be done. Linderman points out that several capital murder cases await trial in our judicial district. While it’s important that the defense and prosecution be ready, adherence to the notion of a speedy trial would benefit victims’ families greatly.

Despite the best efforts of law enforcement personnel, some crimes are never solved. It’s unfortunate for everyone involved, including investigators who are often haunted by the cases that stumped them.

During this week, it’s important to remember that some are carrying a burden that might never be lifted.

Shelly Linderman
Dale and Geneva County News

DA Kirke Adams has requested the juvenile who is charged with the murder of Christian Markoff, who was killed in February of this year, to be certified as an adult. Judge Steagall has certified him as an adult. Unfortunately the alleged murderer has appealed. We pray the appeals court will see the injustice of allowing him to claim youthful offender status in such a brutal offense. We will keep you updated.

The district attorney’s office of Geneva County has also been very involved working with the Florida state’s attorney’s office regarding the 2 suspects that murdered 66 year old James Shore in Florida and the attempted murder of Alabama State Trooper, Officer Lee Marcel Phillips.

State Candlelight Vigil

Friday, April 11th Victims of Crime and Leniency held their annual statewide candlelight vigil in Montgomery, Alabama on the lawn of the Attorney General’s office. The vigil was attended by over 350 family members and friends of those who had been affected by violence. A special thank you to DA Doug Valeska of the 20th judicial circuit for his generous donation to Angel House presented at the vigil.
3rd Annual Day of Service for Volunteers

Thank you just doesn’t seem sufficient enough for all the hard work put in by the folks who came to give of their Saturday to help us clean the yard and garden during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. We truly appreciate each and every one who worked so hard!

Baby Miss Khloe Kennedy and mom Christy, Tiny Miss Mary Kate Cook and mom Karen, Future Little Miss Alayna Buie and mom Millicent, Petite Miss Lexie Davis, Junior Miss Isabella Flowers and mom Tina and dad Kenneth and sisters Alexia and Ashley. Princess Kerissa Justice and mom Amanda Doll, queen of queens Emily Edwards and mom Jennifer. Ashley and Skylar Thomas, Journey, Kendall, Mackinley, and Eden Simpson, Bobie and Don Salt, Sherrie Davis-Foust and Greg Beishir, Matlei and Mikaela Phares, Chuck Linderman, Camren Kirkland, and Richard Ransbottom.

A special thank you to Tony Luker and Sgt. Will Glover who repaired and re-routed the lines to our waterfall. What a labor of love!
Honored by U.S. Attorney’s Office during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week

In recognition of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (April 6-12, 2014), the United States Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Alabama honored organizations for their support and service to communities affected by crime, one of those agencies was the Wiregrass Angel House. Angel House received a letter of appreciation from U.S. Attorney George Beck on April 9, 2014 to recognize their commitment to serving individuals whose lives have been devastated by crime.

“This year’s theme—30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice—presents a perfect opportunity to salute these organizations and their long-term commitment to aiding crime victims. As we celebrate three decades of defending victims’ rights, we are reminded of how far we have come, and how much work is yet to be done,” said Beck.

Only 30 years ago, crime victims had virtually no rights and no assistance. Today, the nation has made dramatic progress in securing rights, protections, and services for victims. Every state has enacted victims’ rights laws and all have victim compensation programs. More than 10,000 victim service agencies now help people throughout the country. In 1984, Congress passed the bipartisan Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which created a national fund to ease victims’ suffering. Financed not by taxpayers but by fines and penalties paid by offenders, the Crime Victims Fund supports victim services, such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs and victim compensation programs that pay many of victims’ out-of-pocket expenses from the crime, such as counseling, funeral expenses, and lost wages.

Crime can have a lasting physical, emotional, or financial impact on people of all ages and abilities, and of all economic and social backgrounds. In addition to these challenges, crime victims face a criminal justice system that often does not have the resources or expertise to help them deal with the remnants of crime.

Thankfully, many organizations in the Middle District have recognized the need for additional services and have made excellent progress in assisting crime victims. The Family Sunshine Center, the One Place Family Justice Center, and the Wiregrass Angel House provide a comprehensive set of services to crime victims in an effort to promote their safety, well-being, and recovery. The Alabama Crime Victims’ Compensation Commission seeks to ease the financial hardships encountered by victims by offsetting some of the lingering and significant expenses of crime.
March 17\textsuperscript{th} marked the fourth anniversary of the murder of Grace Bridges. She was gunned down in her furniture store. Ms. Grace was an amazing mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She raised 3 sets of children and was a very compassionate and professional nurse. She would do without just so others could have what they needed. Ms. Grace was a simple no fuss kind of lady. She believed in diligent work and taught her daughters that nothing was free in life. If you wanted something you had to go out and work hard for it. She never met a stranger and never turned down an opportunity to help others.

Amazing Grace..... That is what her family called her; because of the endearing qualities she possessed. March 17, 2010 was a normal Wednesday for Grace Bridges. She had opened her used furniture store located on South Park Avenue that morning. Her husband was making another trip to Florida to pick up furniture. Her daughter, Wendy, had come by to visit and work that morning, as she always did. Nothing out of the ordinary—a normal day, until later that morning, approximately 11 a.m., when an unknown assailant came to her store robbed and murdered her. She left behind four daughters, six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

On March 17\textsuperscript{th}, in Grace’s memory, family and friends came together to plant a Japanese maple tree, which was her favorite.
New Counselor for Angel House

Angel House is proud to announce the hiring of a new crisis counselor beginning June 1st. Through the generous donation of Wiregrass Area United Way and the allocation committee we were granted enough funds to hire a new counselor. We would like to take this time to thank Walter Hill and the entire staff at Wiregrass United Way as well as all the members of the allocation committee for seeing the great need for victims’ families in our area and providing those much needed funds to make this happen. We at Angel House are very excited with the newest member to our team.

Words of Wisdom

This will be our last words of wisdom as our new counselor will be filling the role and providing a counselor’s corner for future newsletters.

Why is change so hard?

This is a personal question as I am finding it bittersweet that I am able to hire a new counselor that will replace the position that Joyce Miller once held. As most of you know Joyce was my mother and we worked alongside each other for over 14 years assisting victims of violent crime. As I rearrange furniture preparing for our new counselor, I catch myself resisting moving anything of the other counselor’s out. I know she’s not coming back, but to even remove a picture frame was very upsetting. And then I realize it is because it makes her absence final. When I removed the items she used and replaced them with items for the new counselor, I realized she really is gone and is never coming back. That’s why it is so hard to change. I don’t want to accept the fact she isn’t coming back and another person will be here to fill her position. I realize, whether I like it or not, life is moving on without her being here to be a part of it.

So now I will embrace our new counselor and all they will bring to enhance our organization.

Donations

Southeast Alabama Community Foundation
Henry County Pre-Trial
Houston County District Attorney’s Office
Houston County Pre-Trial
IBM Employees
Target Employees
United Way Combined Federal Campaign
UPS Employees
Wiregrass United Way

Memorial for Charles and Linda Waller by their children

Honorarium for Barbara Ward by Mr. Todd Parker
Please remember the children, siblings, and mother of Ms. Rebecca Jackson who was murdered March 5th by her estranged husband.

The trial of Pamela Kelley, accused murderer of Burnard Reynolds, was delayed from April 21st due to a death in the family of the lead detective. The trial should be on the next criminal court docket. The family was disappointed but certainly understood the delay.

Please remember there are five victims’ service officers in Houston and Henry Counties that are more than happy to assist you and your needs. Marcia Ethridge and Ella Johnson in Henry County; Brandi Turner, Kimberly Humphrey, and their newest edition Brooke Lee in Houston County. If you have a question or concern about court don’t hesitate to give them a call.

The Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles denied a Dothan man early release from prison on the 50-year sentence he’s serving for the killing of his teenage brother and attempted murders of his parents. Hats off to DA Doug Valeska for protesting this parole and standing up for the victim even when his own parents wouldn’t. Anthony Paul Bryan pleaded guilty to three felony charges, which included murder and two counts of attempted murder, in 2003. Bryan pleaded guilty to using a 12-gauge shotgun to kill his 17-year-old brother, John David Bryan. The fatal shooting happened on Feb. 26, 1999, just a couple of months from the offender’s 15th birthday. The attempted murder charges stemmed from Bryan’s using the shotgun to shoot his mother, and then firing it again, unsuccessfully, toward his father before running out of the home. Police arrested him several days later in an abandoned home. How sad the parents would not stand up for their murdered son. But we are glad we have a DA who seeks justice for the victim.

Southeast VOCAL news

Southeast Vocal had their local candlelight vigil to commemorate National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, on Sunday, April 6th. A balloon release was held after the ceremony. A special thank you to Sheriff Andy Hughes for being the keynote speaker for the vigil. The next support group meeting will be held Tuesday night at 6 p.m. May 20th at Wiregrass Angel House.
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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

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

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

State of Alabama Board
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