Director’s Note

Taking time to be thankful during the season

This is the time of year we begin thinking about the past year and how we are going to get ready to get through the holiday season.

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years are three of the hardest holidays for survivors of homicide to get through.

This time of year it’s hard to remember why we are thankful especially when we have suffered such a tragedy in our lives. This is the time of year when we stop to reflect what we should be and are thankful for.

I'm thankful for having a loving family.

I'm thankful for working at such an awesome organization.

I'm thankful for having team members that understand what it means to work together.

I'm thankful for having such a wonderful working Board of Directors who understand the vision and the mission for Angel House.

Every day I realize how blessed we at Angel house are to have the individuals, businesses, and district attorneys who believe in our cause and provide the financial as well as the moral support to continue our work in the Wiregrass area.

Shelly Linderman
I’m not ready

Every year it seems like the retail stores start pushing holiday sales earlier and earlier. Thanksgiving and fall colored decors are gone after Halloween. There is all this pressure to get it before it’s gone, buy it while it’s on sale, and get while the getting is good. There are some truly dedicated troopers out there who shop for Christmas presents all year long. They cook extra food at Thanksgiving and buy extra presents at Christmas just in case there are unexpected guests. They are so prepared!

What about you? How are you supposed to be prepared for all these holidays, knowing someone you love won’t be there? Just by asking yourself this question you’ve already started to brace for the impact—so you’re doing well. You know how the holidays have always been and you know they are not ever going to be the same again. For now, your main focus is just to get through that day—just like you are trying to get through today.

For starters, give yourself a break. If it’s been ten days or ten years and someone you love isn’t going to be sitting at the table and you’re sad about that—it’s okay. You have permission to miss someone you love. You also have permission to NOT have holiday cheer. You even have permission to cry! Trying to fake your way through can be exhausting and come on…you aren’t fooling anyone. These are the people who know and love you. Talk to them. Tell them you love them, you’re trying, and that you are missing your loved one. Chances are they will understand. If they don’t….make them sit at the kids’ table.

Set your boundaries and know your limits. Some holiday traditions are just going to be too much to handle. Skip them. Join the family afterwards. Again, be honest and if you have to—be firm. People all grieve differently. To some, carving the turkey and lighting the tree are comforting. To others, it’s devastating. Don’t be pressured to participate in something that overwhelms you. You may never want to participate in this tradition again. You may want to start a new tradition which honors the memory of your loved one, but doesn’t cause quite so much heartache to do.

Have an exit strategy ready. You are encouraged to try. You have lost enough. You don’t want to miss out on any more memories or laughter with the people you hold in your heart that are still here. So as difficult as it is, please try and remember to show them you still love them too by attending. Your efforts will be noted and if it all becomes too much to deal with, a quiet exit will be understood. Go ahead and try to decide before you get to your destination, what you are and are not okay with. The rest of it you can take on as it happens. If the holidays are normally held at your house, this may be a good year to let that competitive relative have a go at their house. On the other hand, the cooking, entertaining, and cleaning, might be a great distraction.

You are your greatest expert. You know what you can and can’t handle. It’s okay to still be hurting. It’s okay to say no. It’s okay to go to bed early and call it a night so the day will be over faster. Take care of yourself and let someone else worry about the rest of it.

Virginia Askew, M.S
Victim’s Assistant
Wiregrass Angel House
National Peanut Festival Parade

Saturday, November 8th the Angel Queens represented Wiregrass Angel House in the National Peanut Festival parade. This year’s theme was “Agri-Venture”. Ashley Thomas, the pageant’s director, entered a float titled “Temple of Peanut” for the queens to ride. Many hours were spent by the Thomas family, the 2014 Angel Queens and their families building this float. Thank you for being such good ambassadors for Wiregrass Angel House!
Donations

Dr. Barbara Alford  
Henry County Pre-Trial  
Houston County Pre-Trial  
IBM Employees  
Target Employees  
UPS Employees  
Wells Fargo  
Wiregrass Foundation  
Wiregrass United Way

Southeast VOCAL News

The Southeast VOCAL Chapter will have their memorial Christmas tree on display at the Houston County Court House, 4th floor lobby. Please take a moment this holiday season to go by and remember our loved ones taken by violence.

For questions about VOCAL or their support groups please contact the leader of the Southeast Chapter, Beckie Schuler, at 334-791-3969.

Thank You Wells Fargo

Wiregrass Angel House was one of several organizations selected to receive a “Community Connection” reward. Each Wells Fargo branch chooses an organization within the community to support. The checks were given to the organizations at a cookout after the National Peanut Festival Parade. On hand to receive the check were: Barbara Ward – Vice President of the Board of Directors, Shelly Linderman – Director of Wiregrass Angel House and several of the 2014 Miss Angel queens.
News from Montgomery

A prison overcrowding task force was formed by Gov. Bentley and Sen. Camel Ward as well as Chief Justice Roy Moore. This task force was formed to find out how to alleviate prison overcrowding and to prevent the federal government from stepping in and doing a lottery to release prisoners. Sen. Camera Ward is chairman of the task force in which they have hired a part of the Pugh foundation to compile figures and to come up with recommendations of how to solve this problem. At present time prisons in Alabama are at 199% capacity. We are in hopes the task force will find reasonable solutions to the overcrowding population but we are watchful that violent offenders will not be released early to satisfy this problem.

The next prison task force meeting is scheduled for December 11 and it’s open to the public. From the recommendations a bill will be presented to the legislators. The new legislative session begins in March. We will continue to keep you up-to-date on this task force.

Human Trafficking

The US Attorney's Office in the Middle District has requested several law enforcement agencies, district attorney offices, as well as private organizations to be members of a taskforce to recommend a standard protocol for those who have been victims of human trafficking. Wiregrass Angel House was asked to be a member of the team in order to help provide resources in the wiregrass area. The next meeting is scheduled for January.

Dothan Police Officer Retires

Last newsletter we told you Captain David Jay was retiring after 26 years of faithful service with the Dothan Police Department. Below are a couple of pictures from his retirement party.
Dale and Geneva County News

It has been busy the last couple of months in Dale and Geneva County. A preliminary hearing was held for the accused murderer of Anthony Roberts in Dale County.

A blind plea was taken for the accused murderer of Eddie Andrews in Geneva County. Defendant Felicia Lane pleaded guilty to manslaughter. TheSentencing is in December.

A preliminary hearing was also held for the defendant who is accused of murdering Matthew Tice in Geneva County. Matthew’s family held a graveside memorial balloon release on his first missed birthday. It was a solemn event attended by those closest to him.

Barbour County News

Murder in Barbour County

Please be in prayer for Chief Richard Johnson’s family in Clio. His father, Eugene, was found murdered in his home September 4, 2014. The motive was believed to be robbery. The investigation by ABI is still on-going.

Court has been very busy in Barbour County in the last couple of months. Marquis Ivory, who has been accused of murdering Darian Lamar Scott in a drive-by shooting, was in court several times. Darrian was murdered January of this year.

A trial was held for Matthew Jenkins who was charged with two counts of murder. Brothers Najee Brown, 25, and Marlon Brown, 20, were traveling south and Jenkins was traveling north on South Eufaula Avenue near the Paul Lee Parkway intersection when the wreck occurred. The two brothers were in a Honda Accord, and Jenkins was in a Jeep Wrangler. Jenkins’ Wrangler reportedly “T-boned” the Accord. Jenkins was under the influence at the time. As the DA began to strike a jury, the defense decided a plea deal was the best option for the defendant.
The trial was held for Pamela Kelly who was charged with murdering Burnard Reynolds in Abbeville. She was charged with murder but the jury, after 2 1/2 days of testimony, convicted her of manslaughter. Sam Clenney, assistant district attorney, did an excellent job in prosecuting this case. Arthur medley, defense attorney, went out of his way to try and Sully the victim. The jury saw through that. Sentencing was November 14. Judge Larry Anderson sentenced Lane to thirteen years. She will end her sentence next month and walk out of jail, never spending one night in a state prison. There certainly was no justice for this family.

There have been several hearings in various court rooms for motions, formal arrangements, and as well mental evaluations for the defense attorneys involving murder trials.

The family of Emmett Tyric Leqwaun Brown had a commemorative plaque placed at Abbeville Memorial Church of God in Christ. A great number of friends and family were present to honor Tyreek’s memory.

We congratulate the Lukers on being chosen “Family of the Year”. Brandi has competed in the Special Olympics for team USA. She and her family are big supports of the Buddy Walk, are active in their church and community. Tony serves on the Wiregrass Angel House board.
Governor Robert Bentley  
State Capitol  
Montgomery, AL 35130  
Taylor Vice, Director  
Constituent Services  
(334).242.7100  
1.800.591.4217

Return Service Requested

Victim Contacts

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 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