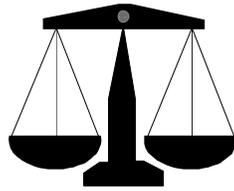


VOCAL NEWSLETTER

September 2010



Volume 10, Number 2

Victims of Crime and Leniency

A NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIRIAM SHEHANE

Hope your summer was good. This morning was the first time I stepped outside and it felt like fall was in the air. What a reprieve!

The word is spreading that VOCAL offers free lodging for those who travel long distances for parole hearings and trials here in the Montgomery area. We have four bedrooms and are now receiving more requests than available rooms at times. It is a blessing that we have been able to offer our many services to devastated crime victims and our prayer is to be able to continue these services.

As you know, funding is harder to come by than ever before. Therefore, we must be more vigilant in fundraising. The Board voted to sell \$5 raffle tickets on a Benelli shotgun (the winner has a choice of 12- or 20-gauge). We desperately need your help in selling these tickets. Please contact us at 1-800-239-3219 (or 334-262-7197 in the Montgomery area).

VOCAL's future will be determined by whether everyone is willing to share in the fundraising efforts. VOCAL is recognized and respected within the judicial system and that is something we fought hard and long to earn. We have made too much progress in the crime victims' movement to surrender now.

There is nothing more therapeutic for a crime victim than to know you are helping other crime victims. Please help us with this fundraiser.

I promise you will be glad you did.

ALABAMA VICTIM ASSISTANCE ACADEMY

Alabama's first Victim Assistance Academy was held August 22 - 27 in Florence. It was sponsored in part by The Office of Attorney General, Troy University, and the Department of Justice - The Office for Victims of Crime. Staff members from the Attorney General's Office coordinated the classes with Rushing Payne as Project Director. A lot of great speakers were heard and a lot of different types of victimization were covered during the week. We learned that team work is very important. VOCAL Angel House and Florence Chapter of VOCAL pay for crime scene cleanup. A segment was done on crime scene techniques by Chuck Linderman, retired law enforcement.

Anne Seymour, Executive Director, Justice Solutions, Inc., Washington, D.C., spoke about the impact of crime on victims, the mental health issues and several other topics. Miriam Shehane was asked to speak Sunday night to open up the conference with her "Story of Survival."

The class ended on Friday with four victims telling their story of survival.

Jean Davis did an outstanding job coordinating this event.



CHAPTER NEWS

JEFFERSON COUNTY CHAPTER 2200 8th Ave. N, Sheriff's Dept. Training Room, 2nd Floor, 1st Thursday, 6 p.m.
Chapter President: Carol Melton, (205) 841-1465
Email carolmeltonb@bellsouth.net
Chapter Mailing Address: 4162 51st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35217

Jefferson County Chapter began May with a preliminary trial for Jockes Haygood charged with murder for the young missing mother Nadia Kersh. Nadia has been missing since November 3, 2010. Search teams and the Homewood Police Department have been looking for her but have not had any luck. Grand Jury will be in September. The chapter also attended a trial for Grace, an eighty year old victim in East Lake. She helped everyone in the neighborhood but someone that she had helped broke into her home and murdered her. The trial of one of the defendant's that murdered Lela Edward's son was delayed due to his escape on bond. The other defendant, Tia Davis, accepted a plea for life without parole. We attended the last Fenai trial. The jury gave felony murder and the sentencing will be October 8. The jury was very emotional and waited to speak to Kayla's mother. Brenda Brown and family can finally go on with their lives. Jeffery Land, who murdered her daughter, was finally executed.

We would like to applaud our District Attorney Brandon Falls and Victim Service Officer Judy Yates who welcomes us and very helpful to our chapter. The Jefferson County chapter attended parole hearings to protest James Thomas, Linda Knight, and David Wayne Camper. Linda Knight was paroled and the other two were denied for five more years. Wanda Jones Miller's parole hearing will be September 28. Defendants are Kenneth Thornton (AIS 139065), and Michael Thornton (AIS 139064), and Stanley Earl Wilson (AIS 137898). Wanda was kidnapped from Baby Does Mine Restaurant in Homewood in 1983. These are terrible men who need to stay behind bars. Wanda has been fighting for victims for many years, so please support her if you can at these hearings.

Jefferson County chapter attended a birthday memorial for Nadia Kersh at Vulcan Park and Michael Edwards at Ruffner Park. Balloons were released at the top of Vulcan. Members also attended a 25-year memorial for Myron Massey, a Fairfield Police Officer who was gunned down. David Barber was guest speaker. The ceremony included acknowledgments from Governor Bob Riley and the Mayor of Fairfield.

Members of the chapter attended a seminar at the Sheriff's Office and met the new members of the Jefferson County Commission. We toured the county jail and had lunch in the jail lunch room. The tour included the intake and the ninth floor where the most dangerous inmates are housed. Several members of the Jefferson County chapter attended the Gulf States LECC Conference in Savannah. It was very informative and the scholarships were greatly appreciated. Our annual July picnic was held at Bradford Park with 30 members in attendance with DA Falls showing his support in attendance. Our monthly meetings are held at the sheriff's training room.

SHOALS CHAPTER Christian Faith Church, 640 County Road 323, Florence, 2nd Tuesday monthly, 6:30 p.m.
Chapter President: Denny Kimbrel, (256) 757-1354; Email bamafnatk@aol.com
Chapter Mailing Address: 442 County Road 111, Killen, Alabama 35645

Members went to a trial in Colbert County to support the Devin Willingham family. Devin was 31 and had a Tuscumbia address. He was shot and killed on January 25 in their home by his wife Brandi Willingham, age 27. She was charged with murder. After a week of trial, the jurors took five hours to come back with a verdict of manslaughter and she is facing possible 10 to 20 years. The sentencing date will be October 7 at 1:30.

Members have gone to bond hearing, motion hearings, and the preliminary hearing to support the family of Tammie Woods from Courtland, Alabama. Tammie was shot and killed in Lauderdale County by Tony Woods; they had been separated. Tony Woods is charged with Capital Murder. As Tammie was leaving his home, he shot into the back of her car five times, with one shot hitting Tammie in the back. Waiting on an autopsy before going to Grand Jury.

Members have gone to arraignment and the preliminary hearing in support of the Scott Shook family. On June 20, 2010, on Scott's 27th birthday, he was shot at his home east of Rogersville in Lauderdale County by his wife, Chastity Shook (22), after going to his birthday party in Tennessee.

Shoals chapter members Cassandra Weakley, Debie Dean, and Debra Grey went to the "Alabama Victims Assistance Academy" in Florence August 22 – 27. Our Lauderdale County D.A. Chris Connolly and his VSO Deanna Tidwell also attended.

SHELBY COUNTY CHAPTER

Owens House, Columbiana, 2nd Saturday monthly, 2 p.m.
 Chapter President: Johnnie Doss Page, (205) 669-4238
 Chapter Mailing Address: P. O. Box 32, Columbiana, Alabama 35051

The Shelby County Chapter has been assisting the family of Christopher Smith who was murdered by his father in July 2010. We have contacted the Shelby County Sheriff's Department on their behalf and attended a meeting with Assistant District Attorney Jill Lee. The family hopes the bond hearing on September 29 will not result in lowering the bond for his murderer.

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER

Wiregrass Angel House, 105 N. Bell, Dothan, 3rd Tuesday monthly, 6:30 p.m.
 Chapter President: Pat Jones, (334) 585-2684; Email patandgary@centurytel.net
 Chapter Mailing Address: 406 Hickory Grove Road, Abbeville, Alabama 36310

Pat Jones says, "A lot of disappointments shattered my world in June. Alabama didn't see the great Attorney General Troy King as I did. I was devastated as I know a lot of others were. His son, Briggs, was also in a church van accident on September 22. Our prayers are with him and his family. The U.S. Supreme Court also sent back Neil Grantham's case to the 11th Circuit in Atlanta. This devastated the Grantham Family. Corey Maze did a fabulous job in his argument and brief on this case. He even won the best brief by the National Attorney Generals for this brief. I don't guess I'll ever understand the minds of the members of the great U.S. Supreme Court. The defendant's name is Billy Joe Magwood.

In July and August, we spent a lot of hours getting ready for a yard sale in Montgomery at the VOCAL Office. We had it August 7th. August brought memories of J.B. Beasley and Tracie Hawlett. Balloons, angels and notes were taken to crosses in memory of their murder (August 1, 1999) still unsolved. I also learned recently that Deputy Chief Myron Williams from Ozark Police will be losing his job October 1st due to city's cutting slots in the city's workforce. I met with him and he is a very compassionate law officer. We hate to see him go. Joyce Miller and Pat Jones met with a family in Phenix City. Frankie Elkin's son, Tony Grimes, was murdered in Phenix City, August 20, 2007. It is unsolved. Pat also attended the memorial for Tony, August 20. A cross was placed at the site with balloons and flowers. Several talked about Tony's life and what he meant to them, candles were lit and messages written on a board.

In every season, there is a reason to rejoice and an opportunity to do good (Eccl. 3:12). The challenge for each of us every day is to find something to rejoice about and some good to do - and then to do both. -*Julie Ackerman Link*

Just as the winter turns to spring, Our lives have changing seasons too;

So when a gloomy forecast comes, Remember -- God has plans for you. - Sper

Every season brings a reason to rejoice

Victims of Crime and Leniency

Established in 1982
 A 501c3 Non-Profit Organization
 Miriam Shehane, Executive Director

Angel House & Wiregrass Angel House

Projects by V.O.C.A.L.
 Shelly Linderman, Project Director

VOCAL is an advocacy group for victims' rights consisting of concerned citizens, victims of crime and their families, law enforcement officers, attorneys, and others interested in reducing crime and improving the plight of its victims.

Angel House is a project by VOCAL that works with families who have lost a loved one to murder. They provide services such as crime scene clean up, crisis counseling, and courtroom attendance, at no charge.

VOCAL Angel House
 422 South Court Street
 P.O. Box 4449
 Montgomery, AL 36103
 1-800-239-3219
 (334) 262-7197
 Fax: (334) 834-5645
 E-mail: vocalonline@yahoo.com
 Website: www.vocalonline.org

Wiregrass Angel House
 105 North Bell
 P.O. Box 7133
 Dothan, AL 36302
 (334) 702-7010
 Fax: (334) 702-7014

Chapters include Jefferson, Shelby, Shoals, and Southeast

The VOCAL NEWSLETTER is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Annual VOCAL membership dues include subscription. Send news items to Mitzie Wheat, Editor, at the VOCAL address or to mwheat@bellsouth.net.

JUDGE SMITHART GIVES JUSTICE TO HEAIRD FAMILY

Victim: Wilfred Heaird

Prosecutor: Ben Reeves

Defense Attorney: Karen Benefield

Judge: Burt Smithart

Defendant: Kwesi Allen

A senseless murder that took the life of Wilfred Heaird and made his mother grieve herself to death has finally seen justice in a courtroom in Bullock County. This is a case of the defendant taking out his anger and shooting the wrong person. After two days of testimony, the jury saw through all the smoke and mirrors of the defense and came back with the right verdict of guilty to reckless murder. Judge Smithart was great in keeping order and hats off to Ben Reeves for his excellent prosecution of a very difficult case! Mr. Reeves certainly shows his passion for justice and compassion for his victims when trying this case. The defendant was convicted of murder and given a Life sentence.

OUR PRAYERS GO OUT TO THE CURTIS RUEDE FAMILY

Four-year-old Curtis Ruede was shot and killed by his uncle in Opp, Alabama. The motive seems to be he was mad because the child dropped a toy on his foot. He took a high powered pellet gun and shot him at point blank range. Please keep the family in your prayers.

HOUSTON COUNTY TRIALS

It has been busy in Houston County over the summer. The judges are working hard to clear backlogged cases. August 2nd the trial of Greg Gross was set. Judge Larry Anderson was the presiding judge over the case. Douglas Valeska was the prosecutor and Dustin Byrd was the defense attorney. The victim was Mr. Christopher Mackey. Mr. Mackey left behind six children, a wife, mother, and father. He was at a club playing pool and watching a ball game when the defendant decided to try and kill a rival gang member and Mr. Mackey was shot by mistake. Thank you Judge Anderson for having this case put on the docket to get swift justice to this hurting family and for sending a message by sentencing the defendant to 99 years for this murder! Great job Doug Valeska in trying this case. The family could not have been more pleased with your handling of the case.

The second murder trial of the summer for Houston County was the State vs. Vincent Trawick. This was one of the hardest cases for the prosecution. The defendant had been out on bail since the time of the murder. Delay after delay for almost four years. Some witnesses had died and others were scared. The problem was not just this Trawick had been accused of murder, but his brother had also been convicted of murder last year. The intimidation was made obvious in the courtroom from the beginning of the trial; so much the deputies had to clear the gallery. But the prosecution never let up. They faced the evidence given and after only two hours of deliberation, the jury came back with guilty of murder. This defendant was so sure he was going to get away with this crime, when the judge wanted to include the lesser charge of manslaughter he rejected it. Great job Mr. Valeska! We hope Judge Conaway gives him the sentence he so richly deserves.

CONTEST FOR NAMING OUR MASCOT--We are looking for creative names and ideas for a mascot for VOCAL Angel House.

Here are the rules (and some suggestions on how to win our favor):

- You may only enter this specific contest once, but you can enter it with as many mascot entries as you like. You can create a whole family of mascots, or just one.
 - *These have to be production quality.* In other words, don't send us an outline or sketch you did on a napkin. We want to see some effort!
 - Suggestion: if you're only sending one mascot, try sending multiple poses. If you're sending a bunch of mascots and can't do multiple poses, send them in a pose that's easy to use for a variety of scenarios.
 - Keep the mascot theme relevant! We don't have any need for a cartoon hippopotamus mascot, you know?
 - *Do not* use trademarked or copyrighted materials.
 - **The grand prize is \$150.00.**
 - Contest is open until Sunday, October 31st.
 - Send your entries to us at contest vocalonline@yahoo.com
 - Make sure you put "MASCOT" in the title of your email. Attachments are cool.
- Thanks and good luck to everyone!

COUNSELOR'S CORNER--Sometimes victims say it better than counselors. I am publishing this in honor of Patricia Collum who was murdered October 6, 1991. This was written by her sister, Mitzie.

In October 1991, my only sister, Patricia Collum, was murdered. In nineteen years, no one has been charged with her murder. Having joined VOCAL shortly after my sister's murder, I have been involved with a number of families who have lost a loved one to violence. The lack of communication and support that I have seen from law enforcement agencies in these cases has made me aware of how fortunate we were to have the police officers that investigated my sister's murder. I felt that their desire to solve her murder was almost as intense as my need to have it solved.

For nineteen years, investigators from the Chilton County Sheriff's Department and the Alabama Bureau of Investigations have worked to solve this case. Often my mother or I have had questions related to the case. If former Sheriff Fulmer (Chilton County) or an investigator was not in when we called, they returned our calls promptly. The same thing is true of the ABI agent who worked her case. In my work with VOCAL, contacts with some law enforcement agencies on behalf of relatives of other victims have not been fruitful. I do not find the compassion and understanding that we were fortunate enough to have. My hope is that those who investigate crimes could have just a little compassion that we were shown. I wish that those who investigate crimes could realize how important it is to the families of victims to know that someone truly cares and works tirelessly to seek justice for the victim. After nineteen years, I have not given up hope that my sister's murderer will be brought to justice because I know that there are police officers who want justice as badly as I do.

I have often been asked about the difference in the feelings I have as a family member of a victim whose crime has not been solved, compared to those that have been solved. My initial response is that having witnessed the justice system at work, I know that "the truth" usually has nothing to do with it. I have seen witnesses in court swear before God to tell the truth, yet I have personal knowledge of the lies they told. I have had to realize that only God knows the truth and is capable of adequate punishment. I guess my feelings arise from a basic need for vengeance. As my sister's murder was not a capital crime, the perpetrator would not be given the death penalty. However, I feel that anything short of that sentence would not be just. When I think of the person who could look into the eyes of Patricia Collum and cut her throat and watch the life drain out, I certainly feel hatred. When I think of the love she had for children and the lost possibilities of her relationship with her children and grandchildren, I certainly feel hatred. But I have realized over the years that I cannot fix it- I can't make the person pay for what they have done, even though that was my initial feeling. I guess that is the next thing I should work on--that need for vengeance.

I have often heard family members of victims say that they just want things to get back to normal. When my sister was murdered, I remember the urgent feeling that we had to take care of her--we had to get her body back from the coroner, we had to get her buried, we had to get a tombstone for her grave--thinking at the time that each step in that process would bring life back to normal. Yet in the end we face the reality that things will never be normal again. You keep thinking when you are driving down the road that you will meet her and wave as you did before. I remember dreaming numerous times that I was going through the process of arranging her funeral again--reliving the horror of the process over and over. While attending parole hearings on behalf of other victims' families, I have seen the emotional strain brought about by facing the possibility of having their family member's murderer released back to society. Participation in the process brings back all of the feelings of anger, despair, and hopelessness originally experienced by the victims' families.

My participation in VOCAL has helped me so much. It has allowed me to share feelings with others that have had similar experiences. Most importantly, it has given me the opportunity to help others. Attending trials and parole hearings allows me to demonstrate my support of the victim's family. Some victims' families are unable to participate in such activities because it is so painful for them. It brings up feelings that are too difficult to deal with again. As victims' advocates, we must understand the differences in how people are able to deal with the trauma they have experienced.

Even if you do not know the family of a victim personally, you can assist in our efforts to support all victims by supporting legislation that protects their rights. You can support legislation that requires criminals to serve their sentence and not be released after serving only a third of it. You can support victims' advocacy organizations by providing monetary support during their fund-raising efforts. Fighting crime and leniency toward criminals requires the joint efforts of victims and non-victims alike.

Before my sister's murder, I certainly never thought that I would have to deal with something that horrible. I thought that things like that only happen to other people. However, the reality is that it happens to people every day; people who never thought it would happen to them. I am reminded of an incident that occurred several years ago when I was volunteering at the VOCAL office. A young man who came in to repair some office equipment looked at the pictures of the victims on the walls and asked Miriam Shehane who they were. When she informed them they were victims, he stated that they looked like normal people. Unfortunately, crime happens every day to normal people.

Mitzie Wheat, sister of Patricia Collum

NOTE FROM PAT JONES, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD--VOCAL has come a long way since it was formed in 1982. We have helped many victims, formed many friendships, helped secure the passage of many laws passed to help victims, traveled many miles (I wonder how many), cried many tears and laughed along the way. We have operated on membership dues, small fundraisers, and donations until four years ago when VOCAL was put in the General Fund Budget for the first time. We saw the need to have a place of our own and were able to purchase a house at 422 South Court Street in Montgomery. It is a wonderful place with several furnished bedrooms. Victims are able to stay here when there is a court case in Montgomery and they have to travel a great distance. All victims from across the state have to travel to Montgomery for pardon and parole hearings. They can stay there also. Since the second year of being put in the General Fund, we have been cut by over \$70,000. This really hinders what we need to be doing for victims. We really need someone to help us with a fundraiser. We are looking at doing a golf tournament but need someone in the Montgomery area to chair the event. If you would like to volunteer or know someone that would like to donate their time please contact me at (334) 618-9327.

TEARS

My days were filled with a constant flow of tears. They just wouldn't stop. As much as I cried from what I was feeling, I cried just as much for the rest of the family. Watching their grief, which only mirrored my own.

The tears would continue to flow, every day, for well over a year. Though the flood has slowly dammed up with time, unexpected surges and leaks bring them randomly, with the intensity of spasms, similar to the muscle contractions of giving birth.

Water creates and sustains life. My tears created a large part of what I've become since losing my brother, Scotty. They loosened locks and bolts on dark secrets my soul held tightly. At the time, while going through the mind-numbing event, I cried the deepest well of water. I had no ability to understand the profound and powerful effect of the simple strands of wet trails down my face.

If anything kept me sane throughout the experience, it was allowing myself to cry. I still do. It's a reminder that I'm only human. To attempt to hide from my tears prevents my soul from healing. Acknowledging the tears, in all the eyes of those who loved Scotty, helped build up my compassion to an unbelievable level, which enabled my heart to continue beating despite its ruptured walls. I can't give you the number of tears that I've shed, yet they have helped carry my soul onward. Tears are pure. During times of great struggle and pain, their wet presence protects you, like a shield.

Cry! Cry! Cry! Allow our soul to cry.

Elizabeth J. Sorrells
Sister of homicide victim Scotty Dewayne Watkins
June 20, 1981 – July 7, 2008

A BIRTHDAY POEM FOR ROB

Dear Rob,

Another birthday without you, another year gone by
Another day, another night, when all I do is cry.
Everyone things that by this time, I should be at peace
But no matter how I try, the pain just will not cease.
The truth is that I miss you more each day that you are gone,
For those who say that time heals all, they must know they are wrong.
The only thing that gets me by is knowing you are near.
And when I tell you all my thoughts, I know that you can hear.

You know how much I love you Rob,
And always, always will.
So save me a place beside you on that great heavenly hill.

Love Forever, Mom
Maureen Trussell for her only child Robert, born 08/02/1971

**We are sorry to have lost Tuscaloosa Chapter due to non-compliance.
 If you are a member of this chapter and would like to continue to receive a bi-monthly newsletter, please contact the state office.**

October is membership renewal month. Complete the membership form and send it with your dues to your local chapter. If you do not have a local chapter, send form and dues to the state chapter at the address below.

MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2010/2011

VOCAL--Victims of Crime and Leniency

P.O. Box 4449, Montgomery, Alabama 36103

Name _____ Title _____

Agency or Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone (Office) _____ (Home) _____ Email _____

Victim's Name _____ My Relationship to Victim _____

Date of Crime _____ Nature of Crime _____

City and County of Crime (City) _____ (County) _____

Type Membership: Regular \$25 Agency/Organization \$50

Are you available and interested in volunteer work? Yes No

NAME OF LOCAL CHAPTER (Circle): Jefferson Shelby Shoals Southeast

Visit our website at www.vocalonline.org

VOCAL

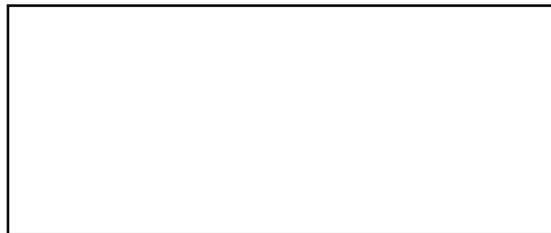
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P.O. Box 4449

Montgomery, AL 36103

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VOCAL appreciates the faithful contributors who support our efforts in assisting crime victims. Your donations make it possible for us to provide more services and support to victims and is tax deductible.

Memorials for Ronnie Holman

Donna Bush, Pete & Betty Holman

Memorial for Darryl Kimbrel

Denny & Johnnie Kimbrel

Memorials for Conni McClenny

Cheryl Wood & Constance Walrond

In Honor of Emily Law

Association of Fundraising Professionals

In Honor of Miriam Shehane

Karen Story

Hope Bennett

Ramona Bolin

Noah Foster

Catherine Gaddy

Calvin Grant

David Hicks

Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin

Montgomery County Commission

Miriam Shehane

Shoals Chapter VOCAL

State of Alabama

SunSouth Bank, Clio

Lee Tipton

Leah Yeager

<p><i>VICTIM CONTACTS</i></p> <p>Governor Bob Riley State Capitol Montgomery, AL 36130 Patricia C. Simpkins Dir., Constituent Services (334) 242-7100 1-800-591-4217</p>	<p>Attorney General's Office of Victim Assistance 500 Dexter Avenue Montgomery, AL 36130 VSO Janette Grantham VSO Doris Hancock (334) 242-7339 1-800-626-7676 www.ago.state.al.us</p>	<p>Department of Corrections Richard Allen, Commissioner P.O. Box 301501 301 South Ripley Street Montgomery, AL 36130 VSO Janet Findley LeJeune (334) 353-3871 www.doc.state.al.us State inmate parole info. 1-888-726-9799, Option 4</p>	<p>Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission Dr. Cassie Jones Director P.O. Box 1548 Montgomery, AL 36102-1548 1-800-541-9388 www.acvcc.state.al.us</p>	<p>State of Alabama Board of Pardons & Paroles Cynthia Dillard, Director P.O. Box 302405 VSO Debra Bonds Montgomery, AL 36130-2405 (334) 242-8050 Fax (334) 353-7701 www.pardons.state.al.us</p>
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