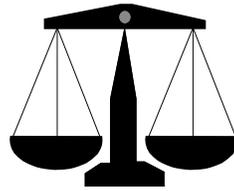


VOCAL NEWSLETTER

September 2011



Volume 11, Number 3

Victims of Crime and Leniency

A NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIRIAM SHEHANE

Hello friends. Are you enjoying the cooler weather? I certainly am but I'm sure when winter comes, I'll quickly forget how hot it was this summer and start complaining about being too cold. But isn't that the way we humans are?

Be sure to mark your calendars for Thursday, September 29. As you know, this is our first statewide Golf Tournament fundraiser. This has been a team effort, but we still need more help to make this a success. See more details in this newsletter.

Just a reminder to all the chapters: Please send in your monthly reports (financial records and minutes of meetings). This is critical for our auditors.

Also, we want all members to let us know about the services you render to crime victims. So many of you selflessly sit through trials with victims or attend parole hearings. You plan chapter meetings and comfort new victims over the phone. We truly appreciate all the good works all of you are doing across Alabama, but when we go to the Legislature or other funding sources for support, it's great for us to have stats to show them the magnitude of our collective services. The form we are using to collect these stats appeared in our last newsletter. It's really rather easy and simple to fill out. We can email or mail the blank form to you, or if you need more information, just call us and we'll gladly help you. VOCAL has been a powerful force for 29 years and we will continue to be as long as we work together. Remember, this is your organization and no one person is more important than the other. Give us your suggestions on how we can become an even better organization.

UPDATE ON THE CURRY TRIAL COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

As you know, we have followed this case with Jim and Bernice Johnson. Their daughter, Ann, who was over 8 months pregnant, 4-year-old Erika, and 20-month-old Ryan were slaughtered with a bush ax in 1985. After being free for almost 25 years, Michel Curry, the husband and father was finally brought to trial for this horrendous murder in April 2011. On July 21 he was sentenced to 3 life terms for the murders. He must serve 30 years before he will be eligible for parole. Bernice Johnson, mother of Ann, and grandmother of the children said, "I'm glad that he's going to prison," adding that she was headed to the cemetery to say goodbye to her slain loved ones. "I hope he thinks of Ann and the children every day." Miriam Shehane and Darlene Hutchinson Biehl attended the sentencing with the family.

CHIEF JUSTICE CHUCK MALONE SWORN IN

VOCAL founder Miriam Shehane (right) and River Region VOCAL President Darlene Hutchinson Biehl (left) recently met with Alabama Chief Justice Chuck Malone. The new chief justice was appointed by Governor Robert Bentley on August 1, following the resignation of former Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb. Prior to his appointment, Chief Justice Malone served ten years as a judge in Tuscaloosa and had been the governor's chief of staff since January 2011. In Alabama, the chief justice is the chief executive officer of the state's court system. Shortly after being sworn in, Chief Justice Malone rescinded the order that eliminated some jury trials statewide, saying that delaying criminal trials is unfair to all parties. "We can cut unnecessary expenditures and budget conservatively without sacrificing justice. Victims should not become victims of our system," he added.



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

District Attorney Brandon Falls was our guest and we had a good crowd for the July chapter meeting. DA Falls explained the court system to us. Trials have been cut back because of money. It has been very informative and appreciated by chapter members that we now have guests for meetings.

Margie Caslin, Mona Lee, Betty Parker and Carol Melton went to a seminar at the Botanical Gardens to hear Mark Wynn. Mr. Wynn started a Domestic Violence program in Tennessee after his siblings and mother lived through some really bad times at the hands of a stepfather. He and his wife speak all over the world.

We attended a parole hearing for the Norwood Rapist, who mutilated three elderly women in the seventies. One lady survived and he was caught. Thomas Black was denied for five years for sexual assault and robbery; Omar Wright denied three years for burglary and assault; Nathaniel Harrison denied four years for kidnapping; and Ronald Sutton denied five years for sodomy of an eight-year-old child.

Chapter members Carol Melton and Margie Caslin attended the signing of the notification bill by Governor Bentley and then went to lunch with Miriam Shehane, Darlene Biehl, Emilea Copeland, Gloria Turner, Doris Hancock, and Janette Grantham. Chapter members also participated with Homewood Police, Verizon, and Domestic Violence for a conference for law enforcement held at the Homewood Library.

The Kersh family will have to wait a little longer for trial. Defendant Jaques Haygood was released until DNA results come back. They are still in trial for their grandson. Keep them in your prayers. Mona Lee babysat Jon and Charlie for them for a week while they were in Family Court.

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA CHAPTER Chapter Coordinator: Teresa Lindsey, (205) 466-5777
 Chapter Mailing Address: 132 Mt. Carmel Road, Altoona, AL 35952; Email dlindsay@hopper.net

RIVER REGION CHAPTER VOCAL office, 422 South Court Street, Montgomery, 1st Sunday monthly, 2 p.m.
 Chapter President: Darlene Biehl (334) 450-5851, Email DFWeditor@aol.com
 Chapter Mailing Address: P.O. Box 240624, Montgomery, AL 36124

SHELBY COUNTY CHAPTER Owens House, Columbiana, 2 p.m., 2nd Saturday in Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec
 Chapter President: Johnnie Doss Page, (205) 669-4238, Email mwheat@bellsouth.net
 Chapter Mailing Address: P. O. Box 32, Columbiana, Alabama 35051

Chapter members attended the sentencing of Angela Allen on August 29. Allen stabbed and killed Bobby Bray in Calera on October 6, 2008. The jury found Allen guilty of murder, and Judge Dan Reeves sentenced her to 85 years. The chapter supported the family by attending the trial and sentencing and by providing lunch for family members.

Chapter members also attended a meeting with the family of Chris Smith and the Shelby County District Attorney's staff to prepare for trial in the case. Chris was murdered by his father, Bobby Jean Smith Jr., in July 2010. Bobby Jean Smith was indicted for murder by a Shelby County Grand Jury.

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

Trial started on August 22, 2011, the jury was selected, and on August 25 Christopher Rich entered a guilty plea to the capital murder of Hollie Newbury from the Petersville area. A mini trial and sentencing took place on the same day as the plea. Rich will serve a life sentence without a chance for parole. Rich shot Hollie Newbury in the face with a shotgun as her two young children watched. Shoals VOCAL members have supported this family from day one. The Newbury family and friends showed so much love for each other and for Hollie. VOCAL fed the Newbury family and friends and wishes to express thanks to the Hampton Inn on Court Street in Florence and to Manager Vickie Atwood for letting us have a meeting place to serve lunch. Vickie has supported VOCAL so many times. Lauderdale County Court House is going through much renovation and is in a mess with no room for a victim's family to have privacy during lunch. Thanks also to Lauderdale County District Attorney Chris Connolly and his staff and to Lauderdale County investigators.

Jonathan Wade Cossey from Waterloo plead guilty to two counts of murder in the deaths of Ricky Waller and Silvia Mitchell from Florence. Sentencing will be in Judge Self's court room on September 28. Shoals chapter members attended some hearings in this case and will attend the sentencing.

We are waiting for a date to be set in the capital murder trial of Tony Woods who killed Tammy Woods. We have and will support the family and friends of Tammy Woods. This trial could happen in October or November.

We attended the arraignment in Lawrence County of Clint Anderson, age 25, from Town Creek, Alabama. Anderson was indicted and charged with manslaughter and vehicular homicide for the deaths of Foy Denson Counts, age 75, and Julia Harville Counts, age 73, of Hatton, Alabama on November 17, 2010. Anderson was going at a high rate of speed and crashed into the rear of the Counts couple as they were on their way to church. Anderson faces two charges on each count. Shoals Chapter members will support the only child and family members of the Counts.

The Shoals Chapter is keeping Pat Jones, Joyce Miller, and Jon Shehane in our thoughts and prayers.

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

The Southeast Chapter has some great people who will step up to the plate when you ask them. Pat probably missed her second meeting in 16 years due to surgery both times. In July, Beckie Schuler, Bonnie Ingram and Summer Ingram held the meeting as Pat was having surgery the next day.

July 31 was the birthday of J.B. Beasley and August 1 was the 12th anniversary of J.B Beasley and Tracie Hawlett's murders. We visited the crosses and put flowers, balloons, candle and a message board to show that they are not forgotten.

At our August meeting, District Attorney Douglas Valeska and several from his office attended and presented some interesting information about several cases that the DA's Office had tried. The district attorney and assistant district attorneys shared what it is like doing their job. One has about 90 cases per month with 2-10 witnesses per case; approximately 1,000 witnesses to get to trial and talk to each of them. One feels like he is pulled 10 ways and it's very stressful, but when the victim looks you in the face, win or loose, and says "thanks", that means a lot. It makes it worthwhile. Another says it's like standing in front of a fire hydrant with it coming at you full blast. You also wake up early in the morning before trial and try to focus on the case. Other statements included that it is hard to sleep at night before a trial; you are going wide open all the time with 40 - 50 cases a month. A new one just getting her feet wet says she is already loosing sleep and it's only her second week. She was looking for witnesses at lunch last week. Being in a job like this must be very stressful. We should take the time to visit our DA's Office and let them know that we appreciate them. We really do need to pray for them. They have an awesome responsibility.

Continue to pray for Joyce Miller, Jon Shehane, Tilly Wuolukka, and Pat Jones. Also remember Hope Bennett; her son, Mark, died in June. Hope has also been in the hospital and rehab.

MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2011/2012

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 River Region Shelby Shoals Southeast

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Why don't I feel better after the trial has ended? How many of us have felt this way? You wait and wait and wait until the trial begins. You know that if you can just get through the trial, and you see the murderer convicted, you are going to know justice was served and you will feel better. You sit through the hours and hours of testimony; some of the evidence so horrible you think you might lose your mind at any minute. But you endure everything for your loved one.

You hold on to the thought that if I can get through this trial and see justice, I will feel better. As the closing arguments end and the judge begins to instruct the jury as to their duties, you feel a sense of anticipation knowing "the end" is very near.

As the jury files back into the courtroom, you are also anxious to hear the one word that you know will make it all worth the months or years of delays and the hours of gut wrenching testimony. You hear it finally - "guilty". You know you will now get to speak for your loved one through your victim's impact statement. You will get the opportunity to remind the world that your loved one is not forgotten, and that every day you are here without them you are in sorrow.

As the prosecutor begins to speak with you and the rest of your family, you realize that you don't feel any different. You still feel the empty whole in your heart. You think, the realization has not sunk in yet. I'm still in shock. So you give it a few days; a few weeks; a few months... You think I still don't feel any better. What is wrong with me?

Nothing... Because most of us think that if we could see justice served to the memory of our loved one, it will make us feel whole again. Nothing will make us feel that way again except bringing our loved one back. Because that's what we all really want - to feel normal again. Then we begin to realize that "normal" will never be again. We learn that we have to learn a new kind of normal in our daily lives. We learn that our loved one's murder has changed the way we live.

Joyce Miller, MS LPC

FRIENDS IN THE NIGHT

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 1 Samuel 18:1

Do you have someone you could call in the middle of the night if you needed help? Bible teacher Ray Pritchard calls these people "2 a.m. friends." If you have an emergency, this kind of friend would ask you two questions: "Where are you?" and "What do you need?"

Friends like that are crucial during difficult times. Jonathan was that type of friend for David. Jonathan's father, King Saul--who was filled with envy at David's popularity and God's blessing on him--tried to kill him (1 Sam. 19: 9-10). David escaped and asked his friend for help (ch. 20). While David hid in the field, Jonathan sat at dinner with his father and quickly realized that Saul did indeed intend to kill David (vv. 24-34).

Because of their deep friendship, Jonathan "was grieved for David" (v. 34). He warned him of his father's plan and told him he should leave (vv. 41-42). David recognized what a good friend he had in Jonathan. The Bible says they wept together, "but David more so" (v. 41). Their souls were "knit" together.

Do you have loving Christian friends you can count on in a crisis? Are you someone your friends would call a "2 a.m. friend"? --*Anne Cetas*

*Thank God for you, good friend of mine,
Seldom is friendship such as thine;
How very much I wish to be
As helpful as you've been to me. --Clark*

A true friend stands with us in times of trial. *Our Daily Bread, August 17, 2011*

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.

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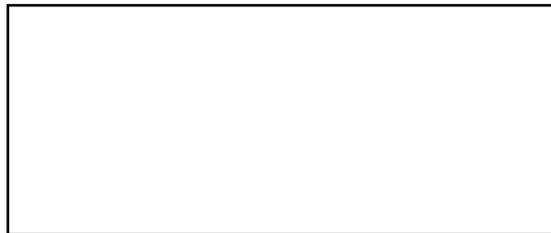
Chapters include Jefferson, Shelby, Shoals, and Southeast Alabama, River Region and North Central Alabama.

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visit our website at www.vocalonline.org
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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.

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David Joseph Schwartz

Senator Jabo Waggoner

Memorial for Patricia Collum
 Mitzie Wheat

Memorial for Sue Ford
 Southeast Chapter VOCAL

Memorial for Ronnie Holman
 Pete and Betty Holman

Memorial for Joe Hubbard
 Ellen Brooks

Memorial for Connie McClenny
 Cheryl Wood & Constance Walrond

<p>VICTIM CONTACTS</p> <p>Governor Robert Bentley State Capitol Montgomery, AL 36130 Taylor Vice, Director Constituent Services (334) 242-7100 1-800-591-4217</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Department of Corrections Kim T. Thomas, 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 231267 Montgomery, AL 36123 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 Montgomery, AL 36130-2405 VSO Debra Bonds (334) 242-8050 Fax (334) 353-7701 www.pardoles.state.al.us</p>
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