

# VOCAL NEWSLETTER

September 2012



Volume 12, Number 2

*Victims of Crime and Leniency*

## A NOTE FROM STATE DIRECTOR, JANETTE GRANTHAM

It has been a busy month since my arrival back in Montgomery. I really had to hit the floor running and just like Forrest Gump, I am still running to get it all done. I am very thankful for this opportunity to once again help crime victims across Alabama. At parole hearings, I have been reunited with victims I helped while at the AG's Office as well as members of the Parole Board. I am extremely proud of the Parole Board and amazed at the good work they accomplish. My first protest was a "pine box" protest. Things are now back to normal!

I must admit there is a lot of excitement at the State VOCAL Office this month. College football season has finally arrived. But even more exciting is VOCAL's 2nd Annual Charity Golf Classic on Thursday, September 27th. There has been a great response from sponsors and players, and we are anticipating a larger turnout than last year. If anyone still wants to donate or play, we can still make it happen! Call 1-800-239-3219.

There is also excitement about VOCAL's 30th Anniversary Celebration on Thursday night, December 6th at 7:00 PM at the Capital City Club in Montgomery. It will be an evening of good food, warm fellowship, and lively entertainment. Make your plans now to attend and celebrate thirty years of supporting and serving crime victims in Alabama. VOCAL has touched so many lives over the years, we all need to join together and celebrate what all VOCAL has accomplished.

We have a new Chairman of the VOCAL State Board. District Attorney Kirke Adams of the 33rd Judicial Circuit was nominated and unanimously selected as our new chairman. Kirke has a proven track record as a warrior for justice, and he is a strong supporter of victims' rights. The Board is fortunate to have a Chairman with his credentials. Our Board is made up of dedicated individuals who care about victims. They come from all walks of life and take time from their busy schedule to volunteer to benefit victims. I am extremely proud of our Board of Directors.

Thanks to all of you that have called or written notes of congratulations on my appointment. I got a very special note from a former defense attorney who reminded me of the "scolding" I gave him at a parole hearing. It must have worked; he is now one of the good guys – a district attorney. A victim from Mobile called to say she was glad she had her "firecracker" back. Hopefully I can live up to these standards. I sure will try.

In closing, remember our Charity Golf Classic on September 27th. Come on down and play a game of golf or join us spectators. You never know, there might be a future Bubba Watson on the course.

## **CELEBRATION!!!!!!**

**ON THURSDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 6 AT 7 P.M. - WE WILL CELEBRATE VOCAL'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AT THE CAPITAL CITY CLUB IN MONTGOMERY. PLEASE MARK THE DATE AND MAKE YOUR PLANS TO ENJOY AN EVENING OF GOOD FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT. FOR TICKET INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL: 1-800-239-3219**

## **CHAPTER NEWS**

### **JEFFERSON COUNTY CHAPTER**

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

### **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

Our Chapter is gearing up for a capital murder trial to start Thursday, September 13, in Blount County. We will be there to support the victims and District Attorney Pamela Casey and her staff. For the past few months VOCAL members have joined together with other agencies in Blount County to form a CCR Team. CCR stands for Coordinated Community Response to domestic violence. The purpose of this team is to bring organizations, agencies, and community members together to enhance coordination between courts, law enforcement, and child welfare services. The team is working to eradicate domestic violence and increase resources for victims, hold abusers accountable, and to enhance the safety of victims. Teresa Lindsay will speak about VOCAL at the September CCR meeting.

### **RIVER REGION CHAPTER**

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

Our chapter's monthly meetings have been a great way for seasoned victims to assist those who have been affected by crime more recently. Not only do we comfort one another, but we provide resources and insight into how the criminal justice system works.

In July, we accompanied the family of Earmon L. Pickett Sr. to a parole hearing for one of Mr. Pickett's killers; Vera Norris received a 15-year split sentence for manslaughter. Fortunately, parole was denied and the inmate will finish her sentence, which will only total about 8 years. The other two co-defendants have not been prosecuted. It is so unfortunate that Olivia, Irene and their family have received so little justice in this case. Paroles were also denied this summer for Major Robinson, who raped a 19-year-old Montgomery woman in 1979, and for Charles Smoot, who attempted to kill a woman in Montgomery County more than 25 years ago. We accompanied these victims to parole hearings, and are delighted they have gotten involved with VOCAL.

Many of those attending our chapter meetings have pending cases. We have been in court recently with the family of 21-year-old Travis Williams, who was murdered last year. Kendall Alexander has pled guilty and received a 50-year sentence, while the cases of the other two co-defendants are still pending.

A capital murder trial in Lawrence County has been delayed. In December 2009, Mr. & Mrs. Nichols were killed in their home; their daughter Rachel lives in Elmore County and is a member of our chapter. Our thoughts and prayers are with this family: They were less than a week from trial when it was delayed (due to the reassignment of a defense attorney). Many thanks to our friends in the Shoals VOCAL Chapter for helping support this family.

We hope to be with Catina Jones and her family later this month in Montgomery as the defendant charged with killing her mother Julie Ann Nelson goes on trial.

Two defendants are still awaiting trial in Elmore County in connection with the murder of 20-year-old Anna Cardwell, and we are awaiting an indictment in the Lowndes County murder of Terrye Mooror's two precious children and her friend Jack Mac Girdner. We are eager to support these families as their cases progress.

Also, our chapter has been exploring how to impact our community with crime prevention programs. River Region members enjoy having VOCAL Angel House counselor Eddie Sammons at many of our chapter meetings, and appreciate all he's doing for those in need.

We continue to pray for long-time VOCAL member Gayle Frost, who has been diagnosed with cancer. Gayle has faithfully served the local chapter for many years as our treasurer. We love you, Gayle!

**SHELBY COUNTY CHAPTER**

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in Feb., Apr., Jun., Aug., Oct., Dec., 2 p.m.  
Owens House, Columbiana

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 a parole hearing on July 11 for Brian Heath Smith. Smith has served 23 years of a life sentence for his role in the murder of Carl Doss in 1989. Smith has had 12 disciplinaries while incarcerated; 3 in the last year. Johnnie Doss Page, Shelby County Chapter President and wife of Carl Doss, appreciates all who attended the hearing to protest Smith's parole. Those who spoke against the parole included: Lt. Jeff Sciascia, Shelby County Sheriff's Office; Miriam Shehane, VOCAL; ADA Jeff Bradley, Shelby County District Attorney's Office; Ashley Harbin, Alabama Attorney General's Office; Jimmy Doss, son of Carl Doss; and Johnnie Doss Page. Smith was denied parole for 5 years.

Brandon Samra was scheduled to have a hearing in August 2012 for a reduction in his sentence, but the hearing has been rescheduled. He was sentenced to the death penalty for his role in the capital murders of Randy Duke and Dedra, Chelsea, and Chelisa Hunt. Jimmy Lamar Killingsworth's retrial was scheduled to begin on July 16, 2012 in Bibb County. He was found guilty of murder in the death of Steven Spears in 2004, but was granted a new trial. Killingsworth entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to life without parole.

The next meeting of the Shelby County Chapter will be October 13 and officer elections will be held.

**SHOALS CHAPTER**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday monthly, 6:30 p.m., Open Door Fellowship, 640 Co. Rd. 323, Florence  
Chapter President: Denny Kimbrel (256) 757-1354, Email bamafnatk@aol.com  
Chapter Mailing Address: 442 County Road 111, Killen, Alabama 35645

The Shoals Chapter supported the family of Tammie Woods throughout the capital murder trial of her ex-husband, Tony Woods, who shot into the back of her car, hitting it five times as Tammie was trying to get away from Tony. One bullet hit Tammie in the back on July 13, 2010. After two weeks of trial, the jury came back with a felony murder conviction. Thanks to Lauderdale County D.A. Chris Connelly, his staff, and the Lauderdale County Investigators for a good job. We attended a bond hearing on September 7 with a large number of the Tammie Woods family, many wearing shirts with Tammie's picture on them. Some good news - Judge Gil Self refused bond for Tony Woods. Sentencing will be September 26; he is facing 20 years to life!

Some Shoals Chapter members drove to Lawrence County to support the family of Betty and Bailey Nichols who were murdered in their home on December 20, 2009 (more than two years ago). Charles Moore, from Colbert County, was arrested for capital murder. The family learned at the pretrial hearing that the capital murder trial that was to start on September 10 will be delayed again. It was so nice to meet Rachel Hughes, her sister, and other family members who are so upset over this being delayed again.

Chapter members attended the parole hearing for Nicky Joe Williams on July 17. Williams ran through a stop sign on Nate Pond Road, killing Cody Fisher (age 12) and Cody's step-father James Fountain (age 34) on Halloween night in 2003 in Colbert County. Williams was charged, convicted and sentenced for two counts of manslaughter and received two 20-year sentences in 2005. This was his first parole hearing and parole was denied. It was nice to meet the family of Marci Terry (mother of Cody Fisher and wife of James Fountain). Nine members of the Marci Terry family stayed overnight at VOCAL Angel House in Montgomery. They were all so thankful to VOCAL, MADD, and the victim advocate from the office of Attorney General Luther Strange for speaking; and Marci Terry and Cody's father did a great job.

Some Shoals Chapter members attended a pretrial hearing in support of the James Campbell family. James was killed by Richard Russell from Colbert County. Russell is charged for DUI manslaughter. The trial is scheduled to begin on October 15.

Chapter President, Denny Kimbrel, plans to go to Montgomery on September 27 to assist with "The Golf Classic" and will be providing food and drinks for the volunteers the night before and day of the tournament.

**SOUTHEAST ALABAMA CHAPTER**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday monthly, 6 p.m.,  
Wiregrass Angel House, 105 N. Bell, Dothan  
Chapter President: Pat Jones (334) 585-2684, Email patandgary@centurytel.net  
Chapter Mailing Address: 406 Hickory Grove Rd., Abbeville, AL 36310

## **COUNSELOR'S CORNER**

Labor Day weekend has come and gone. Autumn is somewhere nearby. Kids and grandkids are back in school. Gas prices continue to keep our wallets thin and politicians likely try our patience as much or more as entertain us. Promises are made, promises are broken. Some of those “kids and grandkids” have lost a father, mother, or other family member. Some parents or grandparents have lost a child or other family member. The loss might be recent or in the more distant past. When the loss occurred as an act of criminal violence, a whole new layer of stressors are added to the mix and the survivor(s) are introduced to an imperfect, yet legal if sometimes unfair, criminal justice system. Emotional issues for survivors are significantly impacted by their individual and overall experiences with this criminal justice system in addition to the emotional issues generated by loss from an act of criminal violence. I believe many, if not most, survivors of this type of loss would agree that loss of a loved one is difficult enough to deal with in its own right, without the added stressors mentioned above.

What are some of the factors that impact survivors of loss of a loved one due to an act of criminal violence and dealing with the criminal justice system? Waiting: Arrest, grand jury, court hearings and continuances, appeals, parole hearings. You can probably think of more. I recently worked with a survivor who waited for months until forensics identified the body of the victim – her son. Learning a new vocabulary: Legalese – what do all those terms mean anyway? And don't they understand I'm grieving?!!! Evidence and plea bargaining: He deserves to die!!! He deserves life without parole!!! Parole hearings: He was sentenced to life! Why should he get a parole hearing this soon?!!! I believe many of you have your own stories of stressful interactions with the criminal justice system.

And then of course there is fear and anger. Fear that the defendant will get out of prison and harm other members of your family or community, or perhaps fear that the defendant will not be brought to justice. And anger comes right along with the fear. We may think or hear terms like “it isn't right; that's wrong; that's not justice; that's injustice; criminals have more rights than victims.” This particular article is focused on criminal homicide and the criminal justice system as they impact survivors of homicide victims, so a more detailed discussion of fear and anger is precluded. Nonetheless, the fear and anger generated by the above factors is very real and has a significant impact on survivors.

How can the impact of stressors such as fear and anger be channeled into positive action to change the criminal justice system toward a more victim/survivor-friendly environment? Well, as an old friend used to say, “roll up your sleeves and get ready for a long day.” Learn about how the system works. Help others going through similar experiences. Contact your legislators. Join VOCAL. Get involved in a project in your community working with the schools, kids, church, or other agency or group, in honor of your loved one. Don't suffer alone. Reach out for help when you need it. Helping others helps shift our focus when we are ready to take the challenge of living with a new reality. And we can be a significant part of changing the criminal justice system, although it takes a lot of ants to build an ant bed. God bless you all.

Eddie Sammons, MS, LPC; Counselor, VOCAL Angel House



## **DON'T FORGET VOCAL'S 2ND ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>**

**AT THE BONNIE CREST COUNTRY CLUB IN MONTGOMERY.**

**REGISTRATION AT 11:00 AM; LUNCH AT 12 NOON**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 1-800-239-3219**

**IT WILL BE A DAY FILLED WITH FUN**

**AND BENEFITS CRIME VICTIMS ACROSS ALABAMA.**

**Victims of Crime and Leniency**

Established in 1982  
A 501c3 Non-Profit Organization  
Janette Grantham, State 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.

VOCAL  
422 South Court Street  
P.O. Box 4449  
Montgomery, AL 36103  
1-800-239-3219  
(334) 262-7197  
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Website: www.vocalonline.org

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

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 mwheat@bellsouth.net.

**A NOTE FROM MIRIAM SHEHANE**

As I reported in the last newsletter, I am giving up the Executive Director's position at the end of this month, and Janette Grantham has been hired to fill this vacancy. She is already on board and is getting this place in tip-top shape. I'll have to admit that both of us are a little overwhelmed at the moment trying to get the golf tournament scheduled for September 27th lined up. We need golfers. Please call us if you know of anyone who would like to play.

I want to once again thank everyone for your support for me and my family over the past 30 plus years through Quenette's death in 1976 and now Jon's death this past January. I honestly don't think I could have made it without your love and support. We need each other. God Bless!! My intent is not to fade away – just fade into the background.

Many of you are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed an interest in VOCAL. Membership dues fund the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter. If you want to continue receiving the VOCAL newsletter, complete the membership form below and send with your dues.

***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. Addresses for each chapter are given in the CHAPTER NEWS section on pages 2 and 3.***

**VOCAL--Victims of Crime and Leniency, P.O. Box 4449, Montgomery, Alabama 36103** **2012 – 2013**

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**   **North Central**   **River Region**   **Shelby**   **Shoals**   **Southeast**

Visit our website at [www.vocalonline.org](http://www.vocalonline.org)  
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**Montgomery, AL 36103**

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**DONATIONS--** 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.

DA Walt Merrell

**Memorial for Patricia Collum**  
Mitzie Wheat

**Memorial for James Beasley**  
James & Dot King

**Memorial for Ashley Gunter**  
Patricia Bolerakis

**Memorial for Troya Bogard**  
James & Dot King

**Memorial for Quenette Shehane**  
Edward & Miriam Shehane

<p><b>VICTIM CONTACTS</b>          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  <a href="http://www.ago.state.al.us">www.ago.state.al.us</a></p>	<p>Department of Corrections          Kim T. Thomas, Commissioner          P.O. Box 301501          301 South Ripley Street          Montgomery, AL 36130            (334) 353-3871  <a href="http://www.doc.state.al.us">www.doc.state.al.us</a>          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  <a href="http://www.acvcc.state.al.us">www.acvcc.state.al.us</a></p>	<p>State of Alabama          Board of Pardons &amp; Paroles          Cynthia Dillard, Director          P.O. Box 302405          Montgomery, AL          36130-2405          VSO Debra Bonds          (334) 242-8050          Fax (334) 353-7701  <a href="http://www.pardons.state.al.us">www.pardons.state.al.us</a></p>
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