

VICTIMS OF CRIME AND LENIENCY

422 South Court Street

P.O. Box 4449

Montgomery, Alabama 36103

VOCAL NEWSLETTER

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A NOTE FROM STATE DIRECTOR, JANETTE GRANTHAM

It is golf time once again. The 5th Annual VOCAL Charity Golf Classic will be on Thursday, September 24, at Quail Walk Golf Course in Wetumpka. The golf tournament is VOCAL's only fundraiser, and to ensure a successful tournament, we need your help. Maybe you can play a round of golf, sponsor a hole, donate a door prize or provide promotional items for the golfers' bags. Any help will be appreciated and will allow VOCAL to continue to serve and assist victims of violent crimes. If you need a registration form, check out vocalonline.org or give the state office a call.

Edward Shehane had gall bladder surgery on Friday, August 28. It has been rough going the last few months for Edward and Miriam. Please remember to keep them in your prayers.

Beginning October 1, Blount County District Attorney Pamela Casey will be the new Chair of the VOCAL Board. If you know anything about Pamela, you know VOCAL is in good hands. Thanks to DA Kirke Adams who has served as Chair for the last three years. Under his leadership and guidance VOCAL has grown and prospered. We are deeply appreciative of the time he has been at the helm. All of our board members are dedicated warriors of justice. They give of their valuable time to ensure victims of violent crimes are not forgotten. From all of us at state VOCAL, we thank you for your dedication.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER - WHEN REALITY HITS!

When you lose someone close it can take months or even years to face the reality of the loss. Reality is the world or state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic reality. The question is when you finally face reality that the person is never coming back, what do you do? Some have said they are afraid to face reality because they feel they may lose their mind or feel they are forgetting their loved one. Others have said they just can't imagine life without them so they choose to just say they have gone on a trip. Facing reality/accepting the loss is simply a part of healing. When accepting reality, first allow yourself to feel what you feel. Remember the tears you don't cry are the ones that drown you. Secondly, give yourself time to think and figure out how to properly handle your feelings. Time is a very important factor when grieving. Last but not least, consult with someone - counselor, family member, friend, etc. Just make sure that you trust them and they are truly there for you. Acceptance is the ultimate goal of grief. An old Chinese Proverb says, "You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair."

L'Teisha S. Holloway, Counselor

CHAPTER NEWS

CENTRAL ALABAMA CHAPTER

Chapter members attended the preliminary hearing for Eric Heath Price on May 26 in Chilton County. Price was arrested for the murder of his wife, Leaj Price, in Jemison on April 13, 2015. Members also met with Leaj's family and prosecutors with the Chilton County District Attorney's office. Prosecutors answered questions for family members and assured them that they would seek justice for Leaj.

On August 24, chapter members attended a hearing for Daniel Scott Gentry in Judge Bostick's court in Shelby County. Gentry entered a guilty plea to capital murder for killing his grandmother, 64-year-old Carrie Elaine Gentry, in March 2012. His plea allowed him to avoid a possible death penalty, and he was sentenced to life without parole. Specifics of the horrendous crime included that he killed his grandmother by stabbing her with a knife, striking her with a hammer, and choking her. Her body was found on April 10 inside her vehicle, rolled up in a rug, in about 40 feet of water in a Leeds quarry. Gentry had pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect, but the psychiatrist's report did not support that plea.

Chapter members attended a parole hearing on July 28 to protest parole for Olin Grimsley who participated in the murder of Ella Foy Riley, mother of Pat Riley Jones, on May 21, 1990. Grimsley was found guilty of robbery and is serving a life sentence. Parole was denied for five years. The co-defendant received the death penalty and was executed on May 14, 2009.

Members also attended a parole hearing on August 19 to protest parole for Thomas Hamilton Jr. Hamilton killed his wife, Donna Price Hamilton, in 1993 in Chilton County by brutally stabbing her numerous times. He then left her three children (ages 4, 3, and 23 months) there with her body. When law enforcement found her (after at least 2 family members went into the home) the 23-month-old daughter was crying and climbing on her mother. Donna was a beautiful and loving person and her children have had to suffer without their mother for many years. Hamilton received a life sentence in 1994. The children were adopted and raised by grandparents. Parole was denied for Hamilton for five years.

We appreciate donations from chapter members to cover the costs of the crime victims' rights week program: Ronnie and Vonciel Dodson, Esther Jones, and Mitzie Wheat.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, October 10, at 2 p.m. at the Owens House in Columbiana.

GULF COAST CHAPTER

We were scheduled to have a guest speaker from Blount County, DA Pamela Casey, but due to another obligation that came up she was unable to attend. Her plan was to come down to Baldwin County and let us know how we can work together with State VOCAL. We are hoping to get her rescheduled soon.

At our last meeting we had a victim update from Catherine Partin. She reported that the Grand Jury heard her case, where her sister came into a school in Elberta where she worked and started shooting. She is still awaiting their decision.

Victims of Crime and Leniency (VOCAL) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which was established in 1982. 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.

State Chapter

Director: Janette Grantham
Physical Address: 422 S. Court Street
 Montgomery, Alabama
Phone: 334-262-7197
Toll Free: 800-239-3219
Fax: 334-834-5645
Email: jgrantham@vocalonline.org
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4449
 Montgomery, Alabama 36103

Central Alabama Chapter

Owens House, Columbiana, 2 pm, 2nd
 Saturday-Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec
President: Mitzie Wheat
Phone: 205-668-0636
Email: mwheat@bellsouth.net
Mailing Address: 35124 Hwy. 31
 Calera, Alabama 35040

East Alabama Chapter

President: Diane Walden
Email: vsodianewalden@yahoo.com
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 31
 Lafayette, AL 36862

Gulf Coast Chapter

Baldwin County Annex, 22251 Palmer
 Street, Robertsedale, 2nd Thursday, 6 pm
President: Tracey Wilson Goens
Phone: 251-533-6832
Email: tgoens15@gmail.com
Mailing Address: 30379 Maury Court
 Spanish Fort, Alabama 36527

Jefferson County Chapter

2200 8th Avenue North, Birmingham
 Sheriff's Dept. Training Rm., 2nd Floor
 1st Thursday, 6 p.m.
President: Carol Melton
Phone: 205-841-1465
Email: carolmeltonb@bellsouth.net
Mailing Address: 4162 51st Ave. N
 Birmingham, Alabama 35217

Mt Cheaha Chapter

25 West 11th Street, Bottom Floor
 Every other month, 2nd Monday, 5:30 pm
Interim President: Carrie Leland
Email: carrie.leland@alabamada.gov
www.facebook.com/MtCheahaVOCAL

River Region Chapter

Domino’s Pizza, 5338 Atlanta Hwy.
 Montgomery (across from Faulkner U)
 2nd Mondays, 5:30 p.m.
President: Darlene Hutchinson Biehl
Phone: 334-450-5851
Email: DFWeditor@aol.com
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 240624
 Montgomery, Alabama 36124

Shoals Chapter

Florence Lauderdale Public Library
 350 N. Wood Ave., Florence
 2nd Tuesday monthly, 5 p.m.
Chapter Contact: Mary Anne Rippey
Phone: 256-648-6163
Email: marippey56@gmail.com
Mailing Address: 634 Lion Drive
 Killen, Alabama 35645
Facebook: VOCAL Shoals Chapter

Southeast Chapter

Wiregrass Angel House
 105 North Bell, Dothan, Alabama
 3rd Tuesday monthly, 6 p.m.
President: Beckie Schuler
Phone: 334-791-3969
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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 354
 Pinckard, Alabama 36371

The *VOCAL Newsletter* is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Victims of Crime and Leniency. Annual membership dues include subscription. Send news items to Editor Mitzie Wheat at mwheat@bellsouth.net.

GULF COAST CHAPTER continued

In the DeBlase trial in Mobile County, the stepmother was sentenced to death by lethal injection. And in a Mobile County case, Zoa White, it will be retried due to the defendant saying the judge did not let him represent himself.

September 25, 2015 will be the National Day of Remembrance for Homicide Victims with a vigil to be held at Riverside Park in Mobile. The vigil begins at 7:00 p.m. and victims may bring a picture of their loved ones. VOCAL is invited to arrive early and greet victims and hand out brochures.

VOCAL Gulf Coast suggested that the DA’s office obtain a release for their cases in the event that VOCAL can become involved and reach out to the victims first.

Member Barbara Colvin suggested that we begin to look at legislation that keeps inmates in prisons and in jails without libraries, gyms, and conjugal visits.

We were thinking of ways to raise money – it was suggested that we have lunch on the square in Bay Minette around the courthouse in October during trial term. Also we discussed the possibility of having a hot dog cart.

Two of the VSOs from the Baldwin County District Attorney’s Office were in attendance. They really care about the victims. We appreciate them and what they do for the victims and their families and for their support of Vocal Gulf Coast. Team Vocal!

RIVER REGION CHAPTER

Many of our members were honored to accompany our long-time friend and tireless victims’ advocate Pat Jones on July 28 when the Parole Board considered the early release of Olin Grimsley, who was convicted in connection with the murder of Pat’s mother in 1990. After hearing from Pat, her brother, and Houston/Henry County District Attorney Doug Valeska, the board denied parole and set his next hearing in 5 years. Pat was amazing and her comments were so perfect. Even as seasoned as she is, we know this is such a tough task for victims. That same day, a few of our members were able to stay and help other victims who were scheduled for hearings before the Parole Board; it’s so heart-warming to know that the knowledge we’ve gathered from the awful paths we’ve travelled personally can benefit others.

We also accompanied Sha’Ron, a local member, who was the victim of an attempted murder and domestic violence case in 1986, when her offender’s parole was considered in July (although Charles Smoot’s record only shows Assault 1 and Intimidating a Witness, but he received a life sentence). In 2012, the board only denied his parole for 3 years, but this summer they determined he was not suitable for release, and scheduled his next hearing for 2020. We were so appreciative to have two prosecutors and a victims’ service officer from Montgomery DA’s office in attendance.

We were thrilled to recently see a cover/feature story about Montgomery County Sheriff Derrick Cunningham in a local magazine (River Region Living). Sheriff Cunningham was elected for the first time in January, although he’s worked in law enforcement locally 26 years, and he has been a good friend to victims. The article highlighted many of the programs he has to reduce crime and serve the community.

Being so close to the Capital City, our chapter members continually watch what’s happening in the Legislature and with many of the state’s criminal justice agencies, to be sure victims are not forgotten or harmed. The Legislature is trying once again to create a General Fund budget (the Special Session began Sept 8, and the fiscal year begins Oct 1). Although the Prison Reform bill passed months ago, it has not yet been funded. As the Prison Reform policies were being created, the framers agreed that the Victim Notification System (which has been in development for nearly 4 years) needed to be completed and expanded, and \$500,000 in funding should be appropriated. But somehow every version of the budget has left out the Victim Notification funding, until our volun-

RIVER REGION CHAPTER *continued*

teers reminded legislators of their promise (then the line item would show up in the next version of the budget). This expanded system will help notify victims when inmates are moved to Work Release or Community Corrections, or being considered for Medical Furloughs, and at other points in the system. It will take a while to finish the Notification System, but at least the ball is rolling.

The next quarterly meeting for the Task Force overseeing the automated Victim Notification System (AlabamaCAN) will be Friday, September 25 at 10 a.m. in Montgomery, and is open to the public. Please consider being part of the solution; your input is valuable. (Contact Darlene at DFWeditor@aol.com or 334-450-5851 to confirm meeting details.)

Our chapter meetings continue to be a good cross-section of victims who have suffered terrible tragedies – some just recently, others two decades ago – each supporting one another, offering encouragement and being effective advocates for others. And providing tangible services to crime victims is very important to our chapter members. Our next meetings will be Monday, September 14 and October 12 at 5:30 p.m. at the Domino's on Atlanta Highway (across from Faulkner University). Please join us!

SHOALS CHAPTER

The Shoals Chapter has had a quiet summer for paroles, but a busy one for court attendance with families. Chapter members attended court with Shirley Brannon's families who are just beginning the justice journey with manslaughter charges. Two capital murder cases are pending. The first that will be set for trial is with the Brioni Ragland family. The other case has two victims and should go to trial next year: Co Anne Taylor Stoner and Joanna Strickland Butler. The Landon Lestsinger family has attended several hearings preparing for their manslaughter trial.

Our chapter has two parole hearings coming up. Autumn Wood, AIS#292662, was convicted in the death of Brooklyn Hollins in October of 2012. She entered a guilty plea in November of 2013 and was sentenced to 10 ½ years. The hearing is set for September 16. The family of Troy Condrey is preparing for their first parole hearing. Troy was murdered in August of 2000. After a plea agreement, Timmie Kelley was sentenced to life and is eligible for parole. The family has not received their official letter at this time.

We hope to have a new meeting place beginning in September. As soon as everything is finalized, we will inform members of the change.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

October is membership renewal month. Please 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.

VOCAL - Victims of Crime and Leniency, P.O. Box 4449, Montgomery, Alabama 36103 **2015 – 2016**

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

CIRCLE

CHAPTER: Central AL East AL Gulf Coast Jefferson Mt. Cheaha River Region Shoals Southeast

2015 VOCAL CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

Benefiting victims of violence in Alabama

Enjoy an afternoon of golf and support a great cause!

Thursday, September 24, 2015

Registration begins at 10:30 a.m.; lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Tee off at 1:00 p.m. No rain date. No refunds.

Lunch catered by Capital Oyster Bar

Location: Quail Walk Golf Course

2110 Holtville Hwy.

Wetumpka, Alabama 36092

Quail Walk is an 18-hole regulation length course with beautiful views tucked within the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, running adjacent to the Coosa River.

Many holes offer extreme scenic vistas.

Info@quailwalkgolfcourse.org

334-567-5014

For more information contact

Jerry Renfroe at 334-399-0900

or

Janette Grantham at 800-239-3219

jgrantham@vocalonline.org

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Toll Free: 800-239-3219
Fax: 334-834-5645
Website: www.vocalonline.org

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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 support to victims and are tax deductible.

In Memory of Emma Holder
 Bill Holder

In Memory of Chris Smith
 George Smith

<p><i>VICTIM CONTACTS</i></p> <p>Governor Robert Bentley State Capitol Montgomery, AL 36130</p> <p>Pam Bye, Director Constituent Services</p> <p>334-242-7100 1-800-591-4217</p>	<p>Attorney General's Office of Victim Assistance</p> <p>501 Washington Avenue Montgomery, AL 36130</p> <p>Patricia S. DeBortoli Victim Services Director</p> <p>334-242-7300 1-800-626-7676 www.ago.state.al.us</p>	<p>Department of Corrections Jeff Dunn, Commissioner</p> <p>P.O. Box 301501 301 South Ripley Street Montgomery, AL 36130</p> <p>334-353-3871 www.doc.state.al.us</p> <p>State inmate parole info. 1-888-726-9799, Option 4</p>	<p>Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission</p> <p>Dr. Cassie Jones Director</p> <p>P.O. Box 231267 Montgomery, AL 36123</p> <p>1-800-541-9388 www.acvcc.state.al.us</p>	<p>State of Alabama Board of Pardons & Paroles Phil Bryant, Acting Director P.O. Box 302405 Montgomery, AL 36130-2405</p> <p>Debra Bonds Victim Services Rep.</p> <p>334-242-8050 Fax 334-353-7701 www.pardoles.state.al.us</p>
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