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# Angel House, home for victims of crime, to impact community



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A grand opening took place Tuesday for the new Wiregrass Angel House.

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Gene Montgomery said a newly renovated home near downtown Dothan will likely bring stabilization to his block.

A couple dozen people celebrated the opening of the Wiregrass Angel House on Tuesday next door to Montgomery’s home. The house will provide many services to communities throughout the Wiregrass as part of the Dothan chapter of Victims of Crime and Leniency (VOCAL).

Montgomery, who has lived in the 100 block of Bell Street for 24 years, said he thought the building’s deterioration would likely cause it to be torn down.

“I’m very pleased with the way it looks,” Montgomery said. “There was a house between it, and one afternoon they bulldozed it. It helps the whole block, it revives it.”

The 2,300-square-foot Angel House will allow the organization to serve the needs of crime victims better.

Sharon Pickens Yohn, who attended the grand opening Tuesday, said officials including the organization’s director, Shelly Linderman, have already provided her with much-needed support as she has dealt with the loss of her sister, Christine Chumney, who suffered multiple fatal gunshot wounds in August 2007. Houston County Sheriff’s investigators arrested Chumney’s husband, James Allen Chumney, and charged him with murder.

“It brings me closer to my sister,” Yohn said. “I wanted to see other victims, and feel like you’re not the only one. It’s remembering the victims. The victims are the ones left behind.”

Yohn said she was pleasantly surprised to find a picture of her sister on the wall inside the Angel House.

“If VOCAL hadn’t contacted me, I don’t know where I’d be,” Yohn said.

Alabama Attorney General Troy King was among those who attended the opening of the Angel House. He said it will provide a place of refuge, solace and encouragement for victims of crimes.

“I’m glad Angel House has finally found a home,” King said. “We can make sure you never have to walk through the system alone.”

The group previously met at the Dothan Police Department for several months, and before that in another city office for several years. The Bell Street house was donated to Angel House by the Flowers family.

Linderman said the group’s new home will provide a place for victims in town for court to stay overnight with two pull-out beds in the home. The facility will also include counseling services, and therapy for children who have witnessed crimes.

Children struggling with grief after the death of a parent are five times more likely to commit suicide, nine times more likely to drop out of school and 20 times more likely to suffer from behavior disorders, according information provided by Angel House.

All services are free, with no paper work or application process involved. Linderman encouraged any victims of crimes to call the 24 hour help line at 1-800-239-3219.

“Angel House is there to assist families who have been devastated by a murder,” Linderman said. “The most important thing is the children’s therapy room. The child will learn to offend if they don’t get therapy. We try to help children so they can become productive members of society.”

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