

Baldwin County victims group organizing, meets Thursday in Robertsdale; headed by daughter of slain Bobby Wilson

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[SPANISH](#) FORT, Alabama — The daughter of slain Spanish Fort businessman Bobby Wilson is organizing a local chapter of Victims of Crime and Leniency (VOCAL) to provide advocacy and support to victims of violent crimes, domestic violence and loss of loved ones.

Tracey Goens, who now manages Wilson's Service Center, said Saturday she wants to provide victims a sympathetic, caring ear, emotional support and direct them to appropriate agencies for grief and depression counseling.

She also said she would pursue law enforcement investigation accountability, and provide followup assistance after an arrest and adjudication of perpetrators.

"A suspect goes to jail, but the ordeal is not over for the victim," she says. "The suspect has avenues, but victim support dries up.

"A lot of people followed my father's story. I hope they look at me and say 'she is going on with her life.' I hope they think if I can, they can, too."

Wilson was beaten to death Aug. 11, 2007 in an early morning attack at his business. Spanish Fort resident Eric Buzbee was charged with capital murder, but acquitted.

Wilson was known as being gruff, but having a heart of gold. Numerous cash-strapped patrons recall him agreeing to time payments for vehicle repairs, or tossing the keys to his personal vehicle for patron use until repairs were completed.

Goens said she is constantly reminded of the brutal death by friends' comments who patronize the establishment, and she struggles with unanswered questions about the investigation.

"This is a victim's group run by victims," she said. "We are not competing with The Lighthouse or CareHouse. We want to partner with them, use their resources and offer ours with fundraisers or any way we can."

She said the Baldwin County District Attorney's Office also has offered support.

At the state level, VOCAL represents victims at parole hearings to protest early release of criminals, and provides accommodations at the Angel House for victims needing to stay overnight in Montgomery for parole hearings or trials, according to their Website.

An organizational meeting will be Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Baldwin County Association of Realtors conference room, 23280 County Road 65 in Robertsdale.

A confidential phone number is 251-284-1063. Someone will answer with a sympathetic ear and direct victims to agencies that are appropriate, or the 24-hour VOCAL counselors. Interested people can mail the chapter at VOCAL, P.O. Box 7434, Spanish Fort, AL 36577.

Annual membership is \$25 per family and \$50 for agencies and organizations. Most of that money goes to fund 24-hour counseling and victims' services, she said, adding that fees can be waived in case of financial hardship.

"We need 10 members to create the chapter," Goens said. "We are just getting started, and we don't see us limited to Baldwin County. There is lots of violence in Baldwin and Mobile counties. We want to be an ear and an advocate for all victims."