

Society gives to victim group

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Contributor

Alpha Phi Sigma, a national criminal justice honor society, presented a check for \$378.31 to the nonprofit organization VOCAL: Victims Of Crime And Leniency.

Jessica Childs, an associate criminal justice professor and adviser to Alpha Phi Sigma, said that the honor society is passionate about giving back to the community and thought VOCAL is an organization that does just that.

"We always try to do something that is victim-oriented, and this was a great way to give back to those in the state of Alabama," Childs said.

VOCAL, according to its website, was founded in 1982, is based in Montgomery and has been working with the "goal to balance the scales of justice by giving crime victims those same rights rather than eroding the rights of the offender."

Miriam Shehane, one of the

founders of VOCAL, said that it does many different things for victims to help balance those scales.

"We go to trials with victims, tell them what their rights are, because they do have rights, and provide public awareness about who we are and what we do," Shehane said.

Janette Grantham, the state director for VOCAL, said that they also provide special help for those who are victims of homicide.

"We also have a VOCAL Angel House, that works with homicide victims only," Grantham said. "We have counselors for those victims, especially children, and have a three-story house with about three rooms for people to stay the night before a trial or other court appointment."

VOCAL is the longest-lasting victims' organization in the state, and the only organization that works with families of homicide victims, according to Grantham.

Erin Lowe, a senior criminal justice major from Alabaster and

president of Alpha Phi Sigma, said that the honor society gave the money to VOCAL because of the services it offers.

"We are giving VOCAL a check of money that we raised for the organization because it is nonprofit," Lowe said. "VOCAL basically turns around and gives the money to victims who cannot afford stuff when they are going through trials."

The money given to VOCAL was collected by fundraisers held last spring at Milky Moo's, where the society received 50 percent of all purchases, and Momma Goldberg's, where it received 10 percent of all purchases.

This is the first time the organization has given a donation to VOCAL.

"This is a great thing because we know that the money is going to a good cause," Lowe said. "We know where the money is going to. We know that the money is going to victims."



Caitlin Collins photo

Alpha Phi Sigma's members and adviser give VOCAL, Victims Of Crime And Leniency, founder Miriam Shehane (center) and state director Janette Grantham (center right) a check to help the organization provide services for victims of violent crimes and homicide. The organization provides counseling on the rights of victims, and a place to stay before court appointments.