

# VICTIMS OF CRIME AND LENIENCY

422 South Court Street

P.O. Box 4449

Montgomery, Alabama 36103

## VOCAL NEWSLETTER

Volume 16 ~ Issue 2

November 2015



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### A NOTE FROM STATE DIRECTOR, JANETTE GRANTHAM

Wow! There was a great turn out for the 2015 VOCAL Charity Golf Classic. It was our fifth year and the attendance this year was the largest ever. Thanks to Jerry Renfroe and all the volunteers who worked so diligently to make the tournament a success. Of course, a big thank you to our sponsors and golfers for their support. Without their support, VOCAL would be unable to help Alabama crime victims. Be sure to check out all the golf sponsors listed in this newsletter!

In FY 2014-2015, VOCAL Angel House provided support and services to 1,946 Alabama crime victims. Sadly there is not only an increase in violent crimes in our nation, but also in our state. Three Alabama cities recently rated in the top 100 most dangerous cities in our nation. In Alabama there have been 1,510 homicides since 2010. Each homicide, according to VOCAL files, leaves behind 8 to 10 grieving family members and friends - so many victims of homicide. Where can these victims go for help? VOCAL. The state staff and VOCAL members across Alabama are here to support and provide services to all these victims. Our toll free number is 1-800-239-3219.

October is membership renewal month for VOCAL. Local chapters keep \$20 of the dues to support crime victims in their area, with \$5 going to the State Chapter. Membership renewal ensures continued receipt of the newsletter.

All of us at VOCAL Headquarters wish all of you and your families a very Happy Thanksgiving! Of course when fall arrives, so does college football. A War Eagle from Miriam and a big Roll Tide from me! (Not sure this true but I heard the Gus Bus is Over Stocked with toilet tissue.)

**Call 1-800-239-3219 to take advantage of these services provided at no charge:**

- **PROTEST:** VOCAL will attend parole and pardon hearings with you or for you.
- **SPEAKERS:** If your organization needs a speaker regarding victim's rights, prison reform, history of VOCAL beginnings, or any victim-related subject, give VOCAL a call.
- **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DISTRICT ATTORNEYS:** VOCAL will attend and protest parole and pardon hearings for you.
- **LODGING:** Need lodging to attend court hearings or parole/pardon hearings? VOCAL has three beautiful bedrooms waiting for you.

## CHAPTER NEWS

### CENTRAL ALABAMA CHAPTER

Chapter members Ronnie and Vonciel Dodson and Bob and Cecilia Hilyer were among many volunteers who worked the Golf Tournament for the State Chapter on September 24. The event is always so much fun.

Eric Heath Price was arrested for the murder of his wife, Leaj Price, in Jemison on April 13, 2015. Chapter members were prepared to attend his arraignment on September 10 in Chilton County. On September 4, Price waived his arraignment and filed a written plea of not guilty and not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect through his defense attorney. A hearing on this issue was set for October 28. Chapter members accompanied family members of the victim, only to find out that Price's attorney was in another court and the hearing was continued to November 10. Our criminal justice system continues to traumatize victims and their family members. Each court appearance is very stressful and causes victims to relive the trauma experienced at the time of the crime.

Jason Hutchinson (age 31) was killed on September 22, 2013 when Nicholas Dunlap fired a weapon into his vehicle near Six Mile Creek in Bibb County. Chapter members attended Dunlap's capital murder trial on October 8 and 9. Dunlap was convicted of capital murder and was also found guilty of reckless endangerment for shooting into Hutchinson's vehicle and endangering the life of his passenger. Dunlap was sentenced immediately after the verdict to life in prison without parole, and his attorney stated that he intends to appeal the verdict.

On September 21, Chilton County Judge Sibley Reynolds denied a motion to set aside a guilty plea in a capital murder case from October 2010. Tanya Vandyke pleaded guilty to capital murder involving murder in the commission of rape and was sentenced to life without parole for the death of Tracy Brown (age 44), who was Vandyke's first cousin. Chapter members attended the appeal hearing on April 21 with Tracy's sister. Judge Reynolds had remarked during the sentencing that this case involved the darkest set of facts he had ever dealt with. Co-defendant James Osgood was convicted on two counts of capital murder and given the death penalty. Van Dyke pleaded guilty to one charge of capital murder and was sentenced to life without parole in April 2014.

Chapter officers for 2015-2016 are: Mitzie Wheat, President; Cheryl Robinson, First Vice President; Johnnie Doss Page, Second Vice President; Linda Coogan, Secretary; Vonciel Dodson, Treasurer; and Mary Furline, Chaplain.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, December 12, at 6 p.m. at the home of chapter president, Mitzie Wheat.

### EAST ALABAMA CHAPTER

The East Alabama Chapter of VOCAL met September 3 at the Bradshaw Library in Chambers County. The purpose of this meeting was to reorganize the chapter and elect officers. Diane Walden is the president, Cindy Sanders is our treasurer, and at this time we do not have a vice president or secretary. We plan to meet in our other counties soon. At this meeting we made the decision to make a financial donation to our local Child Advocacy Center.

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

#### Mt Cheaha Chapter

25 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Bottom Floor  
 Every other month, 2nd Monday, 5:30 pm  
**Interim President:** Carrie Leland  
**Email:** carrie.leland@alabamada.gov  
[www.facebook.com/MtCheahaVOCAL](http://www.facebook.com/MtCheahaVOCAL)

**River Region Chapter**

Domino's Pizza, 5338 Atlanta Hwy.  
Montgomery (across from Faulkner U)  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday monthly, 6 p.m.

**President:** Beckie Schuler

**Phone:** 334-791-3969

**Email:** becca82380@live.com

**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](mailto:mwheat@bellsouth.net).

**EAST ALABAMA CHAPTER continued**

Diane Walden attended court in Randolph County with Evelyn Staples and Mary Jones. Evelyn's son was murdered by a juvenile. He is being tried as an adult with a youthful offender hearing pending. Mary Jones was shot and her husband was killed at the store where Mary worked. Her husband and two children were there to help her close up for the night. They were shot by a 17-year-old who had just killed his father. The trial is pending at this time. We will be attending court and supporting these families through this difficult time.

**GULF COAST CHAPTER**

On September 25, 2015, National Day of Remembrance for Homicide Victims held an event in Mobile at Riverside Park. Tracey Goens, president of Vocal Gulf Coast, was there, along with Susan Tisdale and Kayla Beck from Baldwin County District Attorney's office. Kimmy Keevil performed a very touching interpretive dance along with signing for the hearing impaired to the music of "I can only imagine."

The City of Foley held a training for investigators, and VOCAL Gulf Coast presented a plaque of appreciation to Officer Al Lugo for his work with victims in the Hispanic community. Richard Humphrey of Foley PD expressed an interest in learning more about VOCAL and how to help victims.

Membership renewal time is upon us again and we urge each member to renew his or her membership and ask a friend to join and support our cause to help others. We discussed fundraising and outreach efforts. Carehouse had their second annual Gulf Coast Gospel Jubilee, and it was a success.

The DA updated us on Emmanuel Jenkins (capital murder case) - pleaded guilty to murder in September. He also blind plead to an attempted murder following opening statements. Kenneth Styron, who allegedly murdered Melea White in Fairhope, is pending grand jury. Larry Sheffield, who allegedly shot and killed Jeffrey McMillian outside of Traders in Spanish Fort, was indicted. VOCAL Gulf Coast wants to thank the Baldwin County district attorneys for the hard work they do in fighting for victims and for justice. And we continue to pray for victims.

Our next meeting will be held on November 19, 2015 at 6:00 pm at the Robertsdale Annex.

**SHOALS CHAPTER**

Thanks to the generosity of One Place of the Shoals in sharing their facilities with us, we now are holding our monthly meetings there. After a year of searching for a central, comfortable, private and secure place, we have a home. Our chapter meets every second Tuesday at 6:00.

Deanna Tidwell, VSO in the Lauderdale DA's Office, has a Master's Degree in Counseling and ALC has helped us with our support group meetings. Four times a year she facilitates these meetings for us. Victims helping victims is great support, but having a professional at these meetings has been a great help to us all.

In September we attended a parole hearing for Autumn Wood, who was convicted in the death of Brooklyn Hollins in 2012. Parole was denied and she will serve her complete sentence.

Since the first of September, members have attended ten hearings for multiple cases in Lauderdale County. The capital murder trial for victim Brioni Rutland will begin November 16. Our chapter will be in court along with providing drinks and snacks for the family during trial week. We also have victims Clo Stoner and JoAnn Strickland capital murder case moving forward to be heard in 2016. Unfortunately two additional families have been added for assistance. Shirley Brannon was killed by an impaired driver and Addison Whitaker (age 2) was killed while in a car with an impaired driver.

**SHOALS CHAPTER continued**

Our chapter does its best to reach out to victims when a homicide occurs. Sometimes all we can do is be present in the courtroom. In some cases, we assist families with vigils soon after the murder. We will be assisting family and friends of Connie Jane Ridgeway hold a candlelight vigil November 14; she was murdered in her home October 23.

On Tuesday, November 3, members, friends and family will be attending a parole hearing with long-time members Charles and Rebecca Condrey. Their son Troy was murdered in August 2000. Timmie Dewayne Kelley entered a guilty plea and is serving a life sentence.

**COUNSELOR'S CORNER**

An emotional roller coaster is what victims experience for the rest of their lives after losing someone due to violence. The ups and downs, twists and turns, smooth and rough days, joys and pains become normal and draining at the same time. No one really knows what victims go through until they have been there for themselves. The many sleepless nights and the many tears victims cry seem to never ease up. Holidays, birthdays, and family gatherings are never the same. Their lives are changed forever, and even though friends and family may be there, they still can feel alone. Criminals do not think about the life-long devastation that they have caused to a victim's family. Not only do they have to live without their loved ones, but the process of convicting the person responsible for their pain can be long and drawn out. This surely adds to the emotional roller coaster. Victims finally get to a place where they feel a little hope and then a phone call about a trial or hearing starts their cycle all over again. The emotional roller coaster never ends - you just try to find the joys of the life-long ride. VOCAL Angel House offers counseling to victims in need. Contact us at 334-262-7197.

L'Teisha S. Holloway, Counselor

**VOCAL FUNDRAISER**

**Order your pecans for the holiday season.  
Large Fancy Pieces – 1 lb. bag for \$12.50  
Call Miriam at the VOCAL office.**

**THANK YOU to Darlene Hutchinson Biehl for  
all of your hard work for crime victims  
during this year's legislative sessions.**

**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

## SURVIVOR'S STORY

**By Doris Dease**

When I was asked to write down my thoughts about my experience with my church after my beloved sister Helen was murdered, I had to really sit down and pull up my past, and buried feelings. Although Helen's murder is never far from my everyday thoughts, some painful thoughts I try not to think about since I, in my opinion, did have a not-so-happy experience with my church and church family. It has always been a deep desire of mine to educate Christians about the many needs crime victims have. It did then and still now amazes me that we so easily can sympathize with the offender and can take measured steps to make prison life easier for them, not only make prison life easier, but to work diligently to ensure an early release for some, and at the same time do nothing, not even think about offering a small gesture of kindness to the victim. With a simple excuse, "I don't know what to say to a victim."

On October 4, 1978, I receive a call from my nephew Trammel to tell me my sister, his mother, had been shot to death. I had to travel about three hours before I could get to my mother, other siblings and my sister's husband and four children. I don't remember the trip. The days during the funeral are foggy. However, I do remember friends, church families quietly bringing food. Her pastor came to visit and offer immediate aid to distraught family members. They never returned after the funeral.

My memories of Helen are a treasure to me today, however, the fact that her life was snuffed out by the single act of another person with a shotgun blast to the chest has kept me from pleasant memories of her but, left me with the most desperate feeling of hopelessness that is totally indescribable.

My family was church goers, God fearing and hard-working people. Never was there a time that we children asked, "Do we have to go to church today?" However, when I grew up and married, getting up to go to church seemed too much an effort; we went sporadically. I remember my sister paying us a visit and gently reminding me that God expects His children to congregate themselves together. My husband and I started going back to church and moved our membership to the local church. She told me God takes care of us and knows what we do and if we live our lives for Him we will live forever in a far better place. I believed her. When she was murdered, I questioned God, "Did he not consider her as His child?" Why had He not taken care of her in her greatest hour of need?

I remember how Helen loved her husband's sister who was diagnosed with cancer and did not live very long after her illness was diagnosed. My sister was describing her sister-in-law's last moments of life. Helen told me that her last moments were painless and she just took a deep breath and slowly exhaled and was gone. Helen said not a moan came from her, not a frown on her face. She just died very peacefully. She told me, she knew she was a Christian when she died because her death was peaceful, and because she knew that God gives His children the grace to die. She told that story to me so lovingly that I too was not saddened by the death but somehow felt encouragement. And I have thought of the story many times. I do not feel encouragement now from her story because I do not believe murder is graceful, and yet I am convinced my sister was a Christian. Did God not give Helen the grace to die?

Questions like, “Why did God allow this to happen to her?” and others which are equally unanswerable continued to plague me. Going to church was almost impossible. Teaching my Sunday School Class of third and fourth graders lessons such as the Ten Commandments, “Thou Shalt not Kill”, left me shaking and in tears. I had to resign my post. However, not without my friend and co-worker reminding me that it had been six months and time to get on with my life. Out of desperation, I went to the church office to talk to my pastor. I have wished many times that I had not gone to visit him. I explained to him what happened to my sister and family. I told him that the case as still pending and we were waiting for the sentencing. I told him of my confusion about my feelings of God letting me down, and my problem of attending church with so many questions in my heart. My pastor told me that my relationship with God was being hampered because I had hatred in my heart and that I must pray daily for God’s forgiveness. He asked me to kneel with him as he prayed that I would immediately forgive the offender so that the hatred would be gone and I could have a right relationship with God. My request of him attending some of the court proceedings with me was ended with, perhaps I did not need to attend the proceedings myself since that would enhance my hard feelings toward the offender. “Just put it behind you and take care of yourself and family and you will be fine.” It is ironic to me that no one from my church attended the sentencing with me and my family; however, the defendant’s family pastor not only attended but testified and spoke to the judge on his behalf.

My church friends really had a hard time dealing with me. When asked if I would serve on a committee, I refused. It was taking all I could to just get up in the morning and go to work each day. The trial hung heavily over me all the time. When asked out socially, to dinner or to shop, I also refused. How could I enjoy life when my sister was dead and her husband and children, two of whom were married and two ages 12 and 14, were struggling to survive without her.

It was understandable for my friends to find a more “fun” person to be with; they could not understand. They all felt that if I would just forget about “it” all would be well and our relationships would remain intact. Perhaps they were right; however, it was not possible for me to forget what happened and besides I was constantly reminded by court dates, postponements, and continuances. Perhaps forgetting about it is what they would have done if they too found themselves in my situation. Hopefully they will never have to make similar decisions in similar circumstances.

Finally, I sought counseling and found a source of understanding and comfort. I explained what had happened and the questions that I had concerning God and church. He made a statement to me that helped turn me around. He told me that my feelings were normal and that he would probably feel the same way as I. How simple was that statement, and yet what a tremendous load of guilt was lifted from my shoulder. A very small amount of healing started with that statement and has grown a little more each day.

I will never be “over” my sister’s murder, but I have realized life goes on. Now I can remember the good times we had growing up and our life as adults, without remembering the tragedy of death. That’s how it should be. I still don’t have the answers to my questions, but somehow I feel God has prepared me for my life today. There is great pain among us; all you need to do is reach out. And this is what I do—reach out to crime victims realizing I cannot change what has happened to them and I cannot take the pain away. But I can let them know I care and understand.

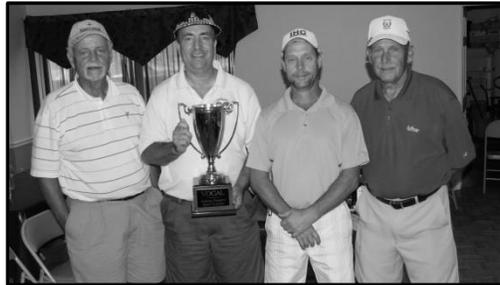
# 2015 VOCAL Charity Golf Classic

## September 24, 2015 - Quail Walk Golf Course

We appreciate the sponsors, participants, and volunteers who made this year's fundraiser a success.

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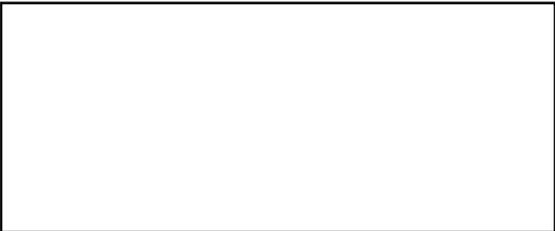
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**VOCAL - Victims of Crime and Leniency**  
**The Quenette Shehane Counseling Center**  
 422 South Court Street, P.O. Box 4449  
 Montgomery, Alabama 36103

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|--|---|---|
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| <p><b>In memory of Paul Little</b><br/>         Doris Little</p>                             | <p><b>In Memory of Karen Price</b><br/>         Mildred Albertson</p> | <p><b>In Memory of Chris Smith</b><br/>         George Smith</p>        |

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