

VICTIMS OF CRIME AND LENIENCY

422 South Court Street

P.O. Box 4449

Montgomery, Alabama 36103

VOCAL NEWSLETTER

Volume 16 ~ Issue 3

January 2016



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A NOTE FROM STATE DIRECTOR, JANETTE GRANTHAM

Happy New Year! Number 16! 2016 is going to be a busy year for VOCAL State Headquarters. The next Board of Directors' meeting is scheduled for January 29 at 11 a.m.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is scheduled for April 10-16, 2016. The State Vigil will be Friday, April 15th at 7:00 p.m. on the front lawn of the Attorney General's Office building. Please make your plans to attend. The vigil is bitter sweet, but it is important for us not to forget our loved ones who have been murdered. The vigil is a time to share the memories of our loved ones. Please send us your testimonials for the Memorial Book and photos for the Tribute to Victims presentation. The deadline for submission is March 25.

VOCAL is scheduling a yard sale for March 5. If you have items to donate, please drop them off at State Headquarters at 422 South Court in Montgomery. Come by and shop with us. Doris says there will be treasures galore. All monies go to support Alabama crime victims. Our Sixth Annual Charity Golf Classic will be held on September 22.

The Legislative Session begins February 2. Victims need to take part in our state and local government. The Prison Reform Bill (Act 185) becomes law on February 1, 2016. Phase One of the New Parole Hearing Guidelines have been posted. Many changes to our prison system are on the horizon, and it is important that we stay informed and alert to these changes.

It is time to renew membership dues. Contact your VOCAL Chapter or State Headquarters. Local chapters receive \$20.00 from each membership.

Our prayers go out to the Holman family. Wesley Holman remains hospitalized in Birmingham.

Happy Birthday to Miriam! She was 83 years young on January 25. That is a lot of candles to blow out! She is an amazing lady and has accomplished so much in her 83 years. She is still going strong. The years may have slowed her steps a little, but her fight for justice is still as strong as ever. Take time to send a birthday wish to this amazing lady. She is an inspiration to all of us.

VOCAL BOARD POLICY CHANGE

Public Speaking: All speakers wishing to speak for VOCAL/VOCAL Angel House, whether it be employees and/or victims' representatives, will need to request in advance authorization from the Board and/or the State Director to represent VOCAL/VOCAL Angel House for any speaking engagements. These requests should be made in writing or Email.

CHAPTER NEWS

CENTRAL ALABAMA CHAPTER

Eric Heath Price was arrested for the murder of his wife, Leaj Jarvis Price, in Jemison on April 13, 2015. 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. Chilton County Circuit Judge Ben Fuller ordered an examination by a certified forensic examiner appointed by the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. The purpose of this examination is to determine his competency to stand trial and his mental state at the time of the offense. Price remains in jail without a bond.

A meeting was held on December 9 at the Board of Pardons and Paroles to discuss the parole guidelines in the Prison Reform Act (SB67), which becomes effective on January 30. Chapter president Mitzie Wheat attended this meeting. A representative of the Council of State Governments presented information that will be helpful to those who deal with the criminal justice system and monitor the status or sentences of offenders. A consulting team from the Council of State Governments assisted in assembling Alabama's data and proposed some policy reforms.

Our December chapter meeting was a Christmas Party held at the home of Mitzie and Henri Wheat, where members enjoyed food and fellowship. Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, February 13, at 2 p.m. at the Owens House in Columbiana. Plans will be made for the program to commemorate National Crime Victims' Rights Week. We will be collaborating with SafeHouse of Shelby County.

GULF COAST CHAPTER

As the holidays approach, our chapter thought it may be nice to have a small group get together so we could just talk, visit and enjoy each other's company. So we planned a Christmas Vocal Social on December 19, 2015. We met at the Eastern Shore Lanes in Spanish Fort. We had a meal together and just made it a time to relax and enjoy each other and being together. Luci Murphy Trimm and her husband, Gary, attended as well. They brought each of us a special gift - a porcelain angel ornament that Gary had made. This was such a thoughtful gift that I know each of us will always treasure.

As we end our year, we will start thinking and planning for our Candlelight Vigil for April 2016. We continue to look for ways to grow and help the victims in our county.

Luci Murphy Trimm's story is included in our newsletter. She has come so far since losing her precious granddaughter Teela and is an inspiration to all of us. Luci has turned a tragic event into something positive, showing others there is hope and shining a light for them.

We know the holidays are difficult for victims because their loved ones will not be here with the families. But I pray for all of the victims for strength and comfort.

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

Email: becca82380@live.com

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 354
Pinckard, Alabama 36371

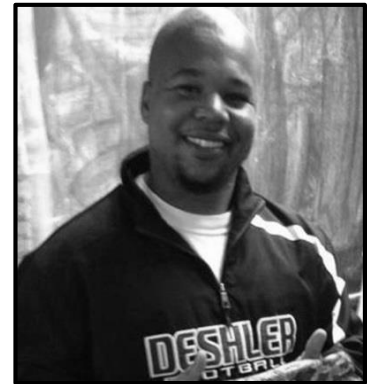
The *VOCAL Newsletter* is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Victims of Crime and Leniency. Annual membership dues include subscription. Send news items to Editor Mitzie Wheat at mwheat@bellsouth.net.

MT. CHEAHA CHAPTER

Mt. Cheaha Chapter includes Calhoun, Cleburne, and St. Clair Counties. It has been difficult for those counties to meet as one chapter. St. Clair County victims have expressed an interest in forming a St. Clair VOCAL, which would allow the combined Judicial Circuit of Calhoun and Cleburne to keep the name Mt. Cheaha. An organizational meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 2.

SHOALS CHAPTER

Members of the Shoals Chapter attended the capital murder trial of Jeremy Williams; he is now convicted of the intentional murder of Brioni Rutland of Tuscumbia. Sentencing is set for January 28, 2016 and Williams is facing 20 years to life. Lauderdale DA Chris Connolly allows use of the Grand Jury Room so that we can have a place to retreat to with the family for breaks and lunches. Families are provided coffee, snacks, drinks and lunches. Our chapter, along with the DA's office, tries to make trial week as comfortable as possible. This trial went long every day and into Saturday night. The jury deliberated just four hours and came back with a guilty verdict. Brioni Rutland (pictured here) was a much-loved volunteer coach at Deshler High School and father of one son.



Our December meeting was held at Logan's Steakhouse. It was a night to gather in fellowship and celebration of the holiday season.

Members also in December attended a marathon preliminary hearing for Steven Chase Stanfield, accused of shooting and causing the death of Marguite Garcia and Michael Linville in September of 2015. The hearing lasted more than three hours. The next court date has not been set.

At our January meeting, we will begin planning the vigil for April.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Someone once said that what we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us. Many victims feel as though accepting the reality that their loved one is really gone means that they are forgetting them. Once you lose someone they become a part of you because you will always think of them and remember the moments/times that you've shared. I know that many say "there is a reason," they say "that time will heal," but the truth is neither time nor reason will change the way victims feel. For no one knows the heartache that lies behind their smiles, no one knows how many times they have broken down and cried, and no one knows how hard it is for victims to live without their loved ones. Family and friends, it's best to allow victims to grieve in their own way and not think it's strange or crazy the way they choose to grieve. VOCAL Angel House offers free counseling to victims who feel the need to talk. Just call 334-799-4313.

L'Teisha S. Holloway, Counselor

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL VICTIM'S TESTIMONIAL

*VOCAL will produce a testimonial booklet for the Candlelight Vigil to be held on Friday, April 15, 2015 in Montgomery during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. If you wish to include a brief memorial or tribute statement in this booklet, complete the following form and mail or fax to the VOCAL office by **March 25, 2016**. Victim photos can also be mailed or emailed and should also be received by **March 25**.*

PLEASE PRINT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO VICTIM: _____

IN **MEMORY/HONOR** OF _____ WHO WAS
(CIRCLE ONE) (NAME OF VICTIM)

_____ ON _____
(NATURE OF VICTIMIZATION) (MONTH/DAY/YEAR)

BRIEF MEMORIAL OR TRIBUTE STATEMENT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE INCLUDED IN THE TESTIMONIAL BOOKLET:

WILL YOU ATTEND THE CANDLELIGHT VIGIL IN MONTGOMERY ON 4/24/15? _____

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:
VICTIMS OF CRIME AND LENIENCY**

P. O. BOX 4449

MONTGOMERY, AL 36103-4449

Fax 1-334-834-5645

Email: lholloway@vocalonline.org (Counselor L'Teisha Holloway)

SURVIVOR'S STORY

Five-year-old Teela Murphy was shot and killed by Christopher Smith (age 17) of Fairhope on April 19, 2012. Teela's grandmother, Luci Murphy said, "That was the day my life changed forever as I had known it." She had received a phone call that she will never forget. Rather than spending the weekend with Teela, she was helping plan her funeral. Teela had been shot while she played soccer with three other children. Nearly three years after that life-changing phone call, Christopher Smith was found guilty by a Baldwin County jury of manslaughter and domestic violence. Smith, now 20, was sentenced to two years in the Baldwin County Corrections Center and three years on probation by Judge Jody Bishop. If Smith violates his probation, he faces up to 25 years in prison.

As reported by The Mobile Press-Register's John Sharp, Smith's jail term is the result of shooting and killing the five-year-old Teela outside a mobile home off AL 181 in Fairhope. Also shot was Smith's three-year-old brother Jayden, who has recovered from his injuries. Fairhope police said Smith was handling a .270-caliber rifle when a single bullet discharged from the gun and hit the young children, who were playing in a field 90 yards away. The Press-Register report stated that Smith's attorneys claimed that he didn't know the gun was loaded. Prosecutors had sought to get Smith convicted of reckless murder, an offence that is committed when a person shows a grave indifference to human life. The jury acquitted Smith of that offense, which is punishable by life in prison.

Luci, Teela's paternal grandmother, began working with the Baldwin County District Attorney's office immediately after Teela's death. For three years following her murder, the perpetrator never spent a night in jail. Yet, Luci continued her fight. She joined VOCAL, an organization of individuals who had lost loved ones to crime. She met with the District Attorney's office more than a dozen times. She called every month or any time she thought of something that might help the case. This past March, Luci and her supporters sat in court for two days and lived that terrible day again - expert testimony, a 911 call from a neighbor, Smith's two plus hour video statement, crime scene evidence, and autopsy photos. They were back in court when Smith was sentenced as a juvenile offender on May 21. Luci feels this was inadequate punishment for her granddaughter's murder - her granddaughter was everything to her. Since Teela's death, Luci has reached out and made contributions to children's organizations in her memory. Luci said her first thought was to open Teela's Treasures as an on-line business to raise money in her granddaughter's honor for children's charities, but this past January, she went a step further. I guess there were other plans for me," she said. She opened Teela's Treasures on March 7, 2015 and painted it pink, Teela's favorite color. It has a coastal theme and includes many of Teela's personal things. Her goal is to continue to honor Teela, help with her healing, and continue to donate to children's advocacy centers in her memory.

"My story, though very tragic, is a story that has a less tragic ending. I want others to know there is always hope," Luci stated. She is not the person she was before this happened, but she is still here. She fought a long, hard three years and knows Teela is proud of her. Teela can now rest in peace, and Luci can focus her energy on continuing to help other children, and even some adults, who face similar situations.

June 19, the grand opening date for Teela's Treasures, located at 8951-A Hwy. 59 in Foley, is a very special day for a special reason. June 19 is the birthday of the store's namesake, Teela Murphy.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - VOCAL, 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

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

Phone: 334-262-7197
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.

<p>Leisa Jimmerson</p> <p>In Memory of Baron Bach Loretta Bach</p> <p>In Memory of Brice Brackin Miriam Shehane</p> <p>In memory of Bill Holder Louise Holder</p>	<p>In Memory of Chris Hutchins Sandra Hutchins</p> <p>In Memory of Richard Schwartz David Schwartz</p> <p>In Honor of Edward & Miriam Shehane J. C. Crosby</p>	<p>In Memory of Jon Shehane Miriam Shehane Karen Story</p> <p>In Memory of Quenette Shehane Loretta Bach Karen Story</p> <p>In Memory of Debra Holder Thompson Louise Holder</p>
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<p>VICTIM CONTACTS</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>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, Exec. 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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