



Domestic violence candlelight vigil

— By Samantha Swindler / Managing Editor

“I thought domestic violence was you had to be beaten black and blue and end up in the emergency room in order to be a victim — at least, that’s what I kept telling myself...”
Angela Greenwood shared her story of abuse to a crowd in London last week, during the seventh annual candlelight vigil for victims of domestic violence.

“It was getting worse,” Greenwood said of the abuse she suffered. “It started with verbal and escalated to physical stuff. I had to do something to get my kids out.”

After 12 years of marriage, Greenwood finally left her abusive husband two years ago. In April, she finalized her divorce and gained sole custody of her two children.

“I finally came to realize, you’ve got to help yourself,” Greenwood told the crowd. “I don’t regret anything, other than not getting out sooner.”

Donna Hensley, organizer of Thursday’s vigil, said she hopes the event can help victims realize they can leave a violent relationship before it becomes too late.

She knows personally that domestic violence can become deadly — in 1995, her 29-year-old niece was killed by her husband.

“Angela Jarvis was my only niece, and she was murdered by her husband in front of her two children,” Hensley said. “He stabbed her in the throat and she bled to death in front of her 3-year-old daughter and her son, who turned 1-year-old right after her death.”

Hensley said family had attempted to talk to Angela about leaving her husband. Angela left several times, but always went back.

“Angela was a very giving person and she had an unconditional love for the people around her,” Hensley said.

Hensley said she now feels, “God took her life in order to spare those children at a later date.” Angela’s case is not unique.

“That year (when Angela was killed), there were several deaths due to domestic violence in our region,” Hensley said. “There was another victim in Laurel County — her boyfriend that lived with her poured gasoline on her.”

Nearly one-third of American women report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, according to www.endabuse.org.

Speakers during the vigil encouraged victims to seek help and apply for a protective order against the abuser. An attorney isn’t needed for an emergency protective order, and Greenwood

said she wished she had gotten one during her marriage, since it would have helped during her divorce hearings.

Help is also available after abuse is reported. Appriss Marketing Manger Rick Jones spoke during the vigil about Appriss VINE Service Ñ Victim Information & Notification Everyday. The nationwide program provides free, automated notification to victims and victimÕs families when an offender is released, dies or escapes.

The service began in Louisville after resident Mary Byron was murdered by her former boyfriend on her 21st birthday in 1993. Byron was not notified that her boyfriend had made bail after raping and assaulting her. He shot her as she was leaving work.

In order to help prevent similar attacks, Jefferson County became the first community to implement VINE exactly one year after her death. Today, Jones said 350,000 calls are made to VINE every month, and the system tracks 1.5 million offenders nationwide.

Information on offenders can be found online at www.vinelink.com or by calling with a touch-tone phone 1-800-511-1670.

ÒDomestic violence is preventable, and it is a public matter,Ó Hensley said. ÒItÕs not something that you should look away from or ignore.Ó

Copyright © 1999-2006 cnhi, inc.

Photos



Beth Ryan with the Family Life Abuse Center in Rockcastle observes a moment of silence during a candlelight vigil in London Thursday for victims of domestic violence.