This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Justice Coalition. I can’t believe that much time has elapsed since Ted Hires saw the need for someone to advocate for innocent victims of violent crime and started this organization. I’m sure most of you know that he was a local businessman who owned several Sonny’s Real Pit BBQ restaurants – and that he and his staff were held at gunpoint, fearing for their lives. During the subsequent trial Ted was appalled that HE, the victim, was merely an observer, a witness, while the criminals were represented by attorneys who ensured THEIR – the criminals’ – rights. Something had to change, and it is very gratifying to sit here 20 years later and look back on what has happened. Sadly, Ted passed away in 2008, but his mission has continued and our Board of Directors, employees, volunteers and many friends and supporters have made it possible to continue the mission he envisioned: to advocate for innocent victims of violent crime, to educate victims about their rights and the mission he envisioned: to advocate for innocent victims of violent crime, to educate victims about their rights and to work with local law enforcement to make our community safer.

Our commitment today is as strong, if not stronger, than it was in 1995. We have not become calloused or indifferent; rather our passion to continue the JC’s mission is firm. In this past year alone, we have assisted more than 300 victims, walking with them through every phase of their devastating experiences – from the occurrence of the crime through the maze of the criminal justice process and beyond. Through difficult times and economical setbacks God has been faithful to provide all our needs and sustain us.

In 2015 I’m excited about a new service we will provide that takes place right here in our office. As we have assessed and responded to the immediate needs of victims and/or their families, we’ve also comforted and lent emotional support during their heartbreaking experience. We’ve accompanied families to every courtroom event, we’ve held press conferences and posted regards for information about murdered or missing loved ones – but we didn’t have the professional expertise to offer grief counseling, which is such a vital aspect of healing.

Now we do! Scotty McGee, our newest victim advocate, has just achieved licensure as a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist and will offer counseling here at the JC office. Instead of having to refer our victims to other professionals located in various parts of the city, we will be a “one-stop” advocate resource. Please read the Hats Off! article in this edition of the JCVA newspaper to learn more about Scotty and what makes him such a valuable asset to this organization.

His older brother was murdered on a college campus, and in a separate incident his sister-in-law was also murdered, so he knows first-hand the pain of loss and how it affects every aspect of one’s life. Scotty realized during his training how much he was benefiting from what he learned and in turn how much more effectively he could help the hurting people with whom he interacts day after day. He is excited about this new facet of his career – and so are we!

We want to continue growing here at the JC – in helping to meet the needs of innocent victims. To do that, we still need your help. You’ll see a short message from JC Board of Directors Chairman Roger Delaney, proposing a united effort to meet our financial needs: 500 people who will pledge at least $25 a month. The secret word is recovery. Your contributions, of course, are tax deductible and you will play a vital role in our services to help innocent victims of violent crime.

ALSO – keep in mind that our 13th annual Together We Can campaign Breakfast will be held February 19, 2015, at 7am in the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville’s dining hall. Please mark your calendars and plan to join hundreds of friends who believe that working together we can make a difference in our community.

God bless all of you and Happy New Year!

Faith Corner

The Faith Community holds the key to true restorative justice for all mankind. Many churches and businesses support this concept. The Justice Coalition wishes to thank the following for their support:

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If your business or church would like to appear in this section, please contact us at 783-6372.

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PRAY JACKSONVILLE
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Join us the second Tuesday of each month as we continue to lift up the City of Jacksonville to God in prayer. We believe when we meet together and pray we can make a difference. Come be part of that difference.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”
— II Chronicles 7:14

“Make a chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.” — Ezekiel 7:23

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JANUARY 2015