

AG Fitch Recognizes Mississippi Heroes Who Serve Victims of Crime



As we begin Crime Victims' Rights Week, we want to recognize the heroes who selflessly walk alongside people on their darkest days and offer a beacon of hope.

Lynn Fitch

(Jackson, Mississippi) As Mississippi and the nation mark the week of April 20 as Crime Victims' Rights Week, Attorney General Fitch gathered with partners, Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi, Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault to honor those who help victims of crime recover and become survivors.

As part of the annual Attorney General's Office Outstanding Service to Crime Victims Awards Ceremony, General Fitch honored those who have demonstrated an exceptional sense of service to victims of crime in Mississippi. This year's honorees are: **Deputy Martin Shields, Jr.** (posthumously), Hinds County Sheriff's Department; **David M. Spence**, District Victim Assistance Coordinator and Investigator, District Attorney's Office, Second Circuit Court District of Mississippi; **Rebekah Reed**, Director of Operations, S.A.F.E., Inc.; and **Deedra Hughes**, Assistant Director, Mississippi Forensics Laboratory.

"As we begin Crime Victims' Rights Week, we want to recognize the heroes who selflessly walk alongside people on their darkest days and offer a beacon of hope," **said Attorney General Lynn Fitch.** "Deputy Shields demonstrated extraordinary courage in each law enforcement position he held during his too brief career and we are honored to recognize him today. His impact continues to be felt in the lives he touched and the community he served. Our prayers remain with his family and loved ones."

"David approaches his work with passion for justice, collaboration, and the well-being of the children and families he serves. His leadership continues to strengthen Mississippi's response to child abuse and ensures that victims receive the support and protection they deserve," **said Karla Tye, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi.**

"Rebekah Reed has dedicated her career to expanding services and strengthening support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. In her role, she not only oversees operations, but also leads funding efforts that ensure survivors have access to the resources they need to rebuild their lives. But what makes Rebekah's work so powerful goes far beyond her title. Her journey began as a part time shelter staff member, and through years of dedication, she grew into a leader within the organization. Along the way, she carried with her not only professional experience, but personal understanding. As both a child and an adult survivor of domestic violence, Rebekah brings a depth of compassion and authenticity that cannot be taught. She leads

with a survivor-centered and trauma informed approach that restores dignity and reminds individuals that their story does not end with what they have experienced. She offers more than services. She offers presence, compassion, and hope," **said Joy Jones, Executive Director of Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

"For more than 25 years, Deedra Hughes has been one of Mississippi's most influential leaders in forensic science and victim-centered justice. As Deputy Director and State CODIS Administrator, she oversees operations across four laboratories and manages the state's DNA database with unmatched precision and integrity. Her impact is felt statewide: she co-authored Mississippi's DNA arrestee collection law, trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in evidence best practices, and in 2024 spearheaded the launch of the Mississippi Sexual Assault Tracking System. Under her leadership, over 1,200 professionals have been trained, creating a new era of transparency and accountability for survivors. Her work doesn't just strengthen systems—it changes lives," **said LeVette Kelly Johnson, Executive Director of Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault.**

In addition, Attorney General Fitch presented Excellence in Advocacy for Human Trafficking Victims to nine organizations for their work with victims of trafficking. These organizations include this year's recipients of grants from the Victims of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Fund. The Attorney General's Office has administered the Fund since 2020 when it was established by the Legislature to provide funds to organizations that serve victims of human trafficking. The 2026 honorees are:

- Center for Violence Prevention
- Domestic Abuse Family Shelter
- Easterseals Mississippi
- Gulf Coast Center for Nonviolence
- Hope Community Collective
- Mississippi Coalition Against Human Trafficking
- Southern Christian Services
- Southwest Mississippi Children's Advocacy Center
- Sunnybrook Children's Home

Click [here](#) for more information about the resources and services the Attorney General's Office offers for victims of crime, including:

- The [Mississippi Victim Services Resource Directory](#) and an [interactive map](#) of county resources
- [Mississippi's Victim Compensation Program](#)
- Interactive online program for creating a [Domestic Abuse Protection Order](#) petition
- Brochures on [dating violence](#), [crime victims' bill of rights](#), [stalking](#), [revenge porn](#), [sexual assault victims' bill of rights](#), and more.

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