



Joan Turner ties a ribbon for her son, Quantez Russell, who has been missing since November 2015.

## Losses never forgotten



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Friends and family honored their loved ones on Thursday by tying ribbons to trees in the Godwin Courts Building courtyard on North Main Street. They held each other close, their shirts bearing names and faces of those remembered and their losses signified by their tightly bound mementos.

The Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and its Victim/Witness Services program also placed a memorial wreath by the trees for lives lost to violent crime in the city. Commonwealth's Attorney Phil Ferguson and Victim/Witness Services Director Diane Bryant conducted the Thursday afternoon ceremony.

Red roses were placed on the black-and-white wreath, and the message was written loud and clear in white letters: "We remember."

"I think it's very important that we remember all people who were victimized by crime, but especially those who have died as the result of a homicide," Ferguson said. "For (any family), that is something they've got to live with forever."

Ribbons may be tied on the trees in the Godwin Courts Building courtyard throughout April, as well as on the trees in front of Suffolk Police Department Precinct 2 at 3901 Bridge Road. These are in recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Ribbons can be picked up at the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office in the Godwin Courts Building from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Participants may also make personalized ribbons in honor of friends and loved ones.

"Your ribbon signifies your love of family, your hope for justice and your commitment of supporting the rights of victims in our community," Bryant told more than two dozen people gathered in the courtyard.

Staff of the Genieve Shelter also participated in the event. The shelter is a safe haven for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking that serves Suffolk, Isle of Wight, Smithfield, Franklin, Southampton and Surry.

"Each person from our (office) signed the ribbon in support of (Child Abuse Prevention Month)," said Bryce Williams, children's advocate for the Genieve Shelter.

There are more than 200 ribbons hanging from the trees in the courtyard as of Thursday afternoon, representing those that Victim/Witness Services has assisted in the city of Suffolk, Bryant said.

"Every year millions of Americans are affected by crime, and National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a time to celebrate the progress achieved in victims' rights, to raise awareness of victims' services and to stand with our families, neighbors, friends and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime," she said.

Ferguson said that it's important to recognize the loss these individuals and families have suffered and that they continue to bear every single day.

"We want those who have suffered that type of loss to know that the person you lost has not been forgotten, and is not going to be forgotten forever. They are always going to be remembered in our hearts," he said.

Joan Turner tied a ribbon for her son Quantez Russell, who has been missing since Nov. 11, 2015.

After the ceremony, she hugged Anthony "A.J." Parker tight.

Parker's son Deshawn was killed in a shooting on Jan. 18, 2006. He was 17 years old.

"I just miss him," Parker said.

Teresa Baker tied a ribbon for her son, Corey Baker, who was killed in November at the age of 30. His grandmother Anna Kindred, 26-year-old sister Laquita Baker, 3-year-old niece Shamyra Lewis and stepfather Oliver Hoffler were also at the service.

"It was nice of them to think about our loved ones that we've lost," Teresa Baker said. "I just appreciate what they've done to bring everybody together in the time of our loss."

Corey Baker was shot and killed on Nansemond Parkway on the afternoon of Nov. 4.

Teresa Baker said he was a loving people-person with a great sense of humor. Kindred said he had a good heart, and Hoffler said that he "put too much trust in people before he got to know them, but that showed how much he cared about people."

Laquita Baker said her brother didn't deserve what had happened to him and that her daughter Shamyra will still sometimes ask where he is.

"I teach her to say that he's in the sky. She'll actually repeat it (and say), 'Corey's in the sky,'" she said.

For more information on the remembrance ribbons, call Bryant at 514-4373. For Suffolk Victim/Witness Services call 514-4366, and for the Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office call 514-4365. Victims of abuse can contact the Regional Crisis Hotline at 251-0144.

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