

AREA RESOURCE GUIDE

(Services listed are provided free of charge, or have income-based scheduling)

Homicide Support/Advocacy

Compassionate Families
354-0007, 721-3326
Life Is Valuable
908-0989
Parents of Murdered Children
262-0866, 713-9683
Victim Services Center
630-6300
Jax. Sheriff's Office Victim Advocate
630-1764

Abuse (Domestic)

24 Hour Hotline
1-800-500-1119
Hubbard House
Emergency Shelter
& Counseling
354-3114
Quigley House (Clay County)
1-800-339-5017

Compensation (victim)

Victim Services
630-6300
MADD Victim Services
388-0664

Consumer Fraud

State Attorney's Office
630-4994

City of Jacksonville

Consumer Affairs Division
630-3467

Detoxification

Gateway Community Services
387-4661

Family

Family Nurturing Center of Florida
389-4244

Legal Assistance

Legal Aid
356-8371

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

(MADD)
388-2455

Rape

Sexual Assault
Response Center
244-RAPE (244-7273)
Office
244-4600

RAPE Recovery Team

722-3000

State Attorney's Office

630-2400

Trauma Counseling

Women's Center of Jacksonville
722-3000
City Victim Services
630-6300

Youth Crisis

Youth Crisis Center
The Safe Place
766-3040



LETTER to the Editor

Thanks for publicizing son's unsolved murder

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued passion and diligent work, and for advertising my son's unsolved murder in the November issue.

This keeps [alive] my hope and faith in knowing that justice will prevail! It may not be today or tomorrow; however, I feel confident that someone will come forward with an ounce of information that will lead to [solving] the senseless murder of my beloved son, Michael Lynn Cohen, Jr.

He is gone from this earth and is now in the presence of God. His loving spirit will always live on, in my life and in the lives of everyone who knew and loved him, as well.

Thank you once again. May God richly bless you.

- Viezelle Lavender

Florida Supreme Court lacks judicial prudence in Terri's Law

The case of Terri Schiavo again demonstrates that the judicial branch believes itself to be superior to the facts, adhering to skewed logic that can only be described as incomprehensible. Apparently its definition of "separate but equal branches" has a unique revised formula: 50 percent judicial, 25 percent legislative and 25 percent executive branch.

The Florida Supreme Court's recent opinion striking down Terri's Law insinuates that the governor and legislative branch cannot make new laws in response to court rulings. It is, in fact, proper and legal for them to do this.

Judge Pariente's written opinion is another example of the judicial arrogance the voters addressed this past Nov. 2. The court, in effect, said, "Our rules mean more than wrongly sentencing a disabled innocent citizen to death." Her opinion stated, "We are a nation of laws and we must govern our decision by the rule of law and not by our own emotions." Yet the Florida Supreme Court failed to acknowledge the powers vested in the legislative and executive branches to draft and enact those laws. The courts can now trump any law by simply saying that it is unconstitutional under their amorphous version of the Constitution.

The tragedy started when a 26-year old woman, with no prior history of heart trouble, collapsed in the middle of the night. She was found by paramedics face down in the carpeting. Her husband, Michael, who knew CPR, did not administer it and he called the paramedics only after being instructed to by her father.

Earlier in the day Michael was angry at Terri about finances, according to Terri's best friend. A police report states that the event should be routed to Homicide, yet no criminal investigation has ever been conducted. A 1991 bone scan revealed broken bones in healing stages, and a radiologist concluded that Terri has a "history of trauma." When this bone scan was discovered in 2002, Judge Greer denied her parents the opportunity to investigate it further. Shortly after this, in 2003, several of Terri's nurses came forward and gave sworn statements that Schiavo frequently asked them, "Can't you do anything to accelerate her death?" Another said he would often say, "Is she dead yet?" and "When is that bitch gonna die?"

Within 48 hours of the collapse, Michael Schiavo convinced his in-laws that he should be in charge of Terri's medical needs to expedite decisions about her care. In a medical malpractice lawsuit filed by Michael after Terri's collapse, he told the court and jury, under oath, that he would "take care of Terri for the rest of her life," and he was convinced "she may live about 50 years," according to the trial transcripts. He asked the jury for sufficient funds to give Terri the care and rehab she would need. Yet, upon receiving the award, instead of providing the rehab, within weeks he placed a "do not resuscitate" order on her medical chart. When the Schindlers (Terri's parents) asked when rehab

would start, Michael decided not to permit disclosures to them regarding Terri's medical condition.

Later, he denied Terri antibiotics for a sepsis infection (knowing that this omission would result in her death) until he was ordered to do so. Michael has even denied Terri basic medical care such as teeth cleaning, and he has prevented visits from her mother, father and siblings. He has also repeatedly removed pictures of them from her sparse room and has not permitted her to be taken outside in more than four years. Recently, Schiavo ordered Terri's window shades to be closed, depriving her of sunlight, and her room lights to be turned off, depriving her of visual sensory stimulation.

In a guardianship ruling that has left many questioning the definition of "clear and convincing," Judge Greer decided that Michael's recent recollection about Terri's "wish to die" is convincing - that recollection coming a full decade after Terri's collapse and after more than \$1.5 million dollars had been awarded to him for her care. In another enigmatic ruling, the court held (unbeknownst to Terri) that death by dehydration and starvation is also her "right to privacy."

One cannot ignore the anomaly of Michael's premise that he loves his wife while at the same time he has been living with another woman (since 1995) and fathering two children with her. He could easily divorce Terri and move on with his new life.

Further, last year on national television Michael's attorney, George Felos, defended Michael's decision to deny Terri the Catholic Sacrament of Holy Communion by saying, "It would cause her distress." This contradicts his relentless position that Terri is in a vegetative state; however, the notion she can be distressed is consistent with 13 doctors who have sworn she is not in a vegetative state. They have opined she can be rehabilitated to swallow on her own and achieve even greater improvements. The three doctors Judge Greer relied on disagreed with the many.

We applaud Gov. Bush and the Florida State Legislature who took a stand for the truth, but many believe it is high time that Gov. Bush, as head of the FDLE, orders a criminal investigation. There are numerous ongoing violations of FL.S825.102 and 103, abuse and neglect of a disabled citizen.

Michael Schiavo has successfully petitioned Judge Greer to cremate Terri's body immediately following her death, permanently disposing of any physical evidence of abuse through an autopsy. Therefore, if action is not taken soon, there may be no way to conduct a meaningful criminal investigation.

Those who attempt to prevent a painful death by starvation and dehydration do so for humanitarian reasons which are in

compliance with Florida statutes protecting disabled wards. Terri is a living person and a citizen of the state of Florida and has committed no crime. This case is not about overstepping executive authority, but about the dignity of human life and its protection under Florida law.

Nancy Peek McGowan
Jacksonville



Terri responds to her mother's playful attention



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