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AG MARSHALL JOINS WITH NATIONAL CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER, CRISIS SERVICES OF NORTH ALABAMA, NORTH ALABAMA HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE AND ASHAKIRAN TO HONOR VICTIMS DURING NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS’ WEEK

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steven T. Marshall joined today with representatives of the National Children’s Advocacy Center, Crisis Services of North Alabama, the North Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force and AshaKiran to honor victims during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, which is April 2-8.

“This is an important time for us to recognize and highlight the issues facing victims in this country,” said Attorney General Marshall. “However, for those of us in law enforcement and those whose careers have been dedicated to seeking justice for individuals who have been harmed, Crime Victims’ Rights Week lasts 365 days a year. We know that violent crime never stops. We know that abuse continues. We know that those who commit offenses need to be held accountable. Most importantly, we know that the needs of the victims never end.”

The Attorney General recalled his own experiences as a prosecutor for 16 years, having “seen first-hand the physical and emotional toll violent crime takes on victims and their families. I know that the scars rarely heal fully. Yet, we can make a positive difference – and, in some ways, a life change -- by standing and supporting those who have been harmed.”

Attorney General Marshall praised the organizations standing with him today for their dedicated efforts to make just such a positive change in the lives of victims and others they serve.

Chris Newlin, executive director of the National Children’s Advocacy Center, described the mission of his agency. “The National Children’s Advocacy Center was founded in 1985 with the philosophy that children who have experienced child maltreatment had the right to receive high quality and multidisciplinary services in a child-friendly setting so they would not be re-traumatized by a system that was intended to care for them. This Children’s Advocacy Center model and its support of Crime Victims’ rights has been replicated in more than 900 communities throughout the United States and 27 countries throughout the world”

Another organization with a major impact on victims is the North Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force, chaired by Pat McCay. Human trafficking crimes involve the use of victims for commercial sex or forced labor. “Our primary focus is to raise awareness of human trafficking, educate the community, and advocate for more effective and compassionate laws.” She noted a major victory last year in the passage of the Safe Harbor Act to treat children who are trafficked as the victims and not criminals themselves. She praised those who work for the



task force as volunteers, “giving their hearts, passion and perseverance in knowing they want to make a difference.”

Attorney General Marshall stated the importance of combatting crimes of human trafficking. “Not only is human trafficking a global tragedy, it is heartbreakingly present even in our own state of Alabama. It is hard for us to fathom that such a vile practice as slavery exists in our midst. Traffickers target those who are most vulnerable, using threats and torture to wear their victims down and render them powerless to seek help. My office and local district attorneys stand ready to prosecute these cases and see this horrible crime punished. We ask that you be watchful of those who may be in trouble. Please do not try to intervene, but instead, immediately report any suspicions to law enforcement. Together we can save victims, one at a time, and reduce the terrible suffering caused by the trafficking of our fellow human beings.”

Janet Shaw Gabel, executive director of Crisis Services of North Alabama, said, “We are honored to stand with Attorney General Marshall to show our support to all victims of crime but especially to the hundreds of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault who come to Crisis Services of North Alabama every year to receive trauma informed supportive services.”

AshaKiran President Bhavani Kakani said, “AshaKiran’s hope is that the Crime Victims’ Rights Week will increase the awareness of crime victim’s tribulations and that one day the laws of our criminal justice system will provide balanced, equal rights to all victims.”

Attorney General Marshall said the theme of National Crime Victims’ Week this year-- Strength, Resilience and Justice--“reflects a vision for the future: one in which all victims are strengthened by the response of our criminal justice system, organizations are resilient in response to challenges faced by victims, and communities are able to seek justice and healing for those who are harmed. ” He went on to note that “all of us who come into contact with victims learn from them. Victims who have faced the worst situations imaginable teach us invaluable lessons consistent with these themes, and our lives are enriched from our interaction with those who have faced so much difficulty. Let us pledge to move forward together to make a difference for each other.”