



Vicki Schieber is pictured testifying before New Jersey lawmakers in December of 2007. Just two hours after her testimony, the New Jersey Senate passed a bill to repeal the death penalty in New Jersey. Schieber was a leading advocate in the campaign.

Mother of murdered daughter speaks out against death penalty

MELANIE HOGGAN

for the Promoter

On May 7, 1998 when Vicki Schieber's 23-year-old daughter, Shannon, was brutally raped and murdered in her college apartment, Schieber's world came to a crashing halt. Twelve years later she has turned her grief into forgiveness and honors her daughter's name daily as she advocates for the elimination of the death penalty throughout the United States.

Schieber will be making a stop in Shelby on Friday, March 26 to share her story at St. William's Catholic Church, located at 531 Main Street, from 7-8 p.m. Schieber hopes to give a glimpse into her journey of pain, healing, and moving forward during this free presentation.

Schieber first discovered her daughter Shannon was missing when her son, Shawn, couldn't locate his sister on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania for a lunch date they had scheduled. It was to be Shannon's last day on campus before heading home for Mother's Day weekend to spend with her family.

Shannon had finished her education at Duke University in three years with a triple major in philosophy, economics, and math. She was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, at the age of 22 to begin working on her Ph.D. "She was talented, she was brilliant, and she was beautiful on the inside out outside. She had unlimited potential ahead of her," shared her mother.

The week before she died she also had something else, a stalker. A man in his mid-twenties had his sights set on her and she even commented to a few friends that she had seen someone following her. Shannon's last night before going home for the holiday weekend was to be spent studying for her final exam

the next day. It was a night that turned out very different. Schieber said, "Everything went wrong for Shannon that night."

Schieber will share the details of Shannon's story at her lecture on Friday night, however, after learning of Shannon's death, and after living through the agony of Shannon's funeral, Shannon's family gathered at their home in Maryland and began talking through the impact of her death and how they as a family would deal with it.

"It was then that we put into words our belief in the sanctity of life. While I had grown up in a very strong Catholic family and had strong beliefs about life, I had never had to define what that meant, especially not in this situation. We didn't know if the man would ever be caught, but if he was we didn't want the death penalty," offered Schieber.

In fact it took law enforcement four years until the serial rapist was apprehended in Colorado. In the meantime the killer had married, had a good job, and had also racked up 14 rape victims, six in Pennsylvania and eight in Colorado. "He was a serial rapist. He never had the intention of murder. Shannon was his only murder victim," shared Schieber.

"In that period of time, we were trying to deal with this issue. We were not for the death penalty and we started learning about the justice system. In some states they have the death penalty and in some states they don't. There are geographical disparities in the use of the death penalty, economic disparities and racial disparities. Currently there have been 130 death row inmates who have been released because their conviction was a mistake. I never knew any of this and it blew me away," commented Schieber.

By the time Shannon's killer was apprehended, Schieber knew her position on the death penalty. She saw the man who had changed everything on April 23, 2002 at a hearing back in Philadelphia. He had confessed to Shannon's killing

See Schieber on 8A



photo by Patti Warburton

Beth Olsen was taken by surprise when she was named the Silver Spur winner at the Ag Appreciation dinner Friday, March 19 at the Shelby Elks Club. Mark Daniels of KSEN had the honor of presenting this prestigious award to Olson for her community service over the years.

Beth Olsen's service to community earns her 2010 Silver Spur honor

Berry Fun Daycare.
Enthusiastic.
Teacher.
Helpful.

Those are just some of the attributes that earned Shelby's Beth Olsen the 2010 Silver Spur Award. Olsen received the award on Friday, March 19, at the annual Ag Appreciation dinner, sponsored annually by KSEN and area businesses.

Olsen was nominated for the award by Misty Vermulm, Carla and Meghan McNamara. They cited her lifetime of service to the Shelby community, noting she has "influenced countless young lives as well as their parents."

Olsen, who raised a dozen children and is proud grandmother to 20 grandchildren, taught religious education to local youth for years. "For years she devoted two evenings every week at the hospital and nursing home, offering company to the sick and elderly... This consistent service, without public thanks or recognition, is reason enough to officially show our appreciation," believes Vermulm.

Meghan McNamara was privileged to attend Olsen's daycare as a toddler. Today she is her after-school and summertime helper. "Beth helps kids learn how to walk, how to read, to learn manners and even potty trains them." McNamara, continued, "She helps the older school kids with homework and is very active in the Catholic Church. Anyone who knows Beth is blessed to know such a kind and

generous person."

Carla McNamara, who has known Olsen for the past 16 years, said "Beth offers a well-balanced mix of love and discipline. She has the respect of the kids because she respects them. The kids know that in Beth they have found someone who is a good listener, has a cheerful upbeat attitude, someone who will rock them, read them a story or teach them new things."

She continued, "When there is a crisis, whether large or small, Beth is the first person to say, 'what can I do' or 'let me do this for you and your family.' She has such a peaceful and calm demeanor that is reflected in her sincerity."

A few years ago, Olsen didn't hesitate to call the "Swapping Bulletin Board" and ask area listeners to donate an unused computer to a nursing home resident so he/she could play games and keep his/her mind sharp. That simple phone call resulted in the donation of two computers to the nursing home for residents' use.

That same strategy was used by Olsen a year later when she put out the call for used backpacks to be given to underprivileged school-age children who needed them.

Last fall, Olson was instrumental in spearheading a coat and blanket drive for those in need in the nearby Browning area. She opened her home as a drop-off point and cheerfully

See Beth Olsen on 8A

Jeanne Keck, five Scouts honored at Spring Court of Honor

Five scouts were honored for their continued efforts in scouting during the spring Court of Honor this past weekend. Although no one was advanced in rank, the troop has been working hard toward rank requirements and merit badges.

The four scouts who earned the required badge of Citizenship in the World were: Tanner Raph, Michael Marler, Josh Habets and Phillip Sundgren. Other badges earned included: Bird Study, Josh Habets; Environmental Science, Phillip Sundgren; and World Conservation Award, Phillip Sundgren.

Jeanne Keck was honored for her many years of dedication to Troop 555 and Pack 552 during the district's annual scouting appreciation banquet held in Cut Bank. She has tirelessly provided support and leadership in her role as Den Leader, Troop Committee member and Treasurer. She was presented with the "Scouter of the Year" award for 2010.

Following the Court of Honor, the annual Friends of Scouting campaign was presented by John Wiegand. These funds help to sustain the scouting program in Montana and specifically Shelby.

Individuals interested in supporting the Boy Scouts of America may contact District Commissioner John Wiegand at 339-2395. Boys interested in joining Troop 555 may contact Assistant Scoutmaster Rob Habets at 424-2453.

See related photos on 8A of this week's issue.



photo by Patti Warburton

Rock Svennungsen sang Irish songs at the Senior Center for the annual St. Patrick's Day dinner and also included a Happy Birthday to Alice Flesch for her 90th birthday.



photo by Nancy Wallace

Taking part in the Missoula Children's Theater production of Robinson Crusoe in Sunburst Saturday were Nicole Friesen as Leonard the Leopard. Cast members behind her from left are: Grace Turner, Mikey Buckley, Jessica Rouse, Marshall Bock, Aelie Rowell, Chantel Rohlf, Zak Jarvis, Marnyn Farbo, Mikayla Cole, Cierrah Farbo, Tim Jarvis, Katie Law, Shaylee Alford, Lee Rouse, Tirzah Davis and Halee Head.

