

Your Honor,

My name is Brenda Foley. I am the Executive Director for Gibson County Animal Services. I have served as an animal cruelty and neglect investigator in the Animal Welfare Industry for 14 years

Today we stand before you in the matter of State vs Richard Stallings. Mr. Stallings stands before this court today admitting his guilt for the crimes in which he has been charged, but this case goes to the heart of the societal issues we face today across our nation and our world. The issues of increased violence in our schools, workplace, homes and society.

After many school shootings, schools have had to put policies in place to combat violent behavior, because of the rising cost of liability insurance businesses today must have workplace violence policies. And everyday in our world Social Service Agencies face the horrors of child, elderly and spousal abuse.

We see this pattern of violence everyday in our newspapers, on our televisions and in the courtrooms. Where does this pattern of violence begin? It begins with the child who pulls the dog's ear making it cry out in pain, it begins in the teenager who sets a stray cat on fire. It begins with the Dad who gets angry at his wife and kicks the family dog. The violence has a beginning.

As a society we must start at the beginning. Beginning to address the problems of animal cruelty and neglect is the grassroots of the problem. Our future generations need us to address these issues today. As a society we must work together to teach our children, grandchildren and their generations to come, that compassion for all creatures can, and will lead to a less violent world.

In the words of St. Frances of Assisi, "If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men."

Will this be our generation's legacy? Or, will we as a society stand together and say, "No, we can make a difference." We can make our world less violent for our future generations by educating the public on the issues of animal cruelty and neglect and when those efforts fail, by prosecuting and punishing those who choose to commit these crimes. We will send a message that these issues matter and we care about the world we leave behind.

This community came together and let their voice be heard, "Not in our community, not yesterday, not today, not tomorrow." A community who rose up to be a voice for those who have none. A community that cares about the legacy we will leave behind for our future generations to come.

For in the words of the great Dr. Albert Schweitzer, "We must never permit the voice of humanity within us to be silenced. It is man's sympathy with all creatures that first makes him truly a man."

We would like to extend our gratitude to the court who provided the necessary search warrants needed to investigate this case. To the Gibson County Sheriff's Dept. who went above and beyond their normal duties as law enforcement professionals.

To the Gibson County Prosecutor's Office and Deputy Prosecutor Sharon Werne who visited the scene to witness first hand the depraved indifference to the suffering of these horses by Mr. Stallings. For sorting through the mountain of evidence brought before them in this case. And for pursuing a case many Prosecutors would not have. And though, bound by sentencing guidelines set by legislation, sought some justice for the horses who were lost, those who are still suffering and those who may still lose their battle with life.

And to the hundreds of volunteers from this community, the Tri-State community, the State, and our Nation who came forward with open hearts and willing hands, we have planted a small seed of justice today.

Now we must be challenged to grow that seed across our community, our state, our nation and our world.

And to you Mr. Stallings, I hope you have had heard what is echoed here today and think about the legacy you will leave behind.