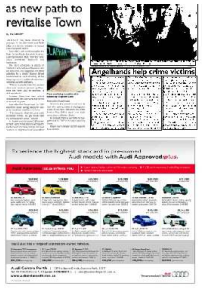

Western Suburbs Weekly
Tuesday 11/10/2011
Page: 6
Section: General News
Region: Perth, AU
Circulation: 42978
Type: Suburban
Size: 265.13 sq.cms.

slice
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press clip

Angelhands... Ann O'Neill with Jenny Van Der Westhuizen, who lost her husband during a violent home invasion in South Africa Picture: Andrew Ritchie d36486

Angelhands help crime victims

ANN O'Neill is putting a face on victims of crime.

The founder of the West Leederville-based Angelhands is encouraging victims to share their photo and story via www.angelhands.org.au to help create photo story boards to be displayed in public areas.

Dr O'Neill said while photos and stories behind offenders were often published, victims of crime remained faceless.

She said the aim was to raise awareness about how crime changed lives forever.

Angelhands volunteer Jenny Van Der Westhuizen is a victim of crime. In South Africa in October 2008, Mrs Van Der Westhuizen, her husband and their three children became the victims of a violent home invasion that left her husband dead and children petrified.

"They shot and killed my husband in front of me, and then tried to kill me but alarms went off and they ran away," she said. "We had already planned a holiday to Australia so my children and I came over here and were connected with Ann. Angelhands has been my support system since then."

Mrs Van Der Westhuizen, who now helps victims at Angelhands, has completed a community services degree at Tafe and her two sons have settled in Perth while her daughter is in England.

Dr O'Neill recently returned from the 37th Nova Conference in Philadelphia – themed With Liberty and Justice for All Victims – that she attended thanks to a Perth Convention Bureau City of Perth scholarship won earlier this year.

She said the conference was about networking and building relationships, and enticing similar conferences to Perth.

She is also part of a new group comprised of crime survivors, professionals in related fields and former WA Attorney general Cheryl Edwardes that will advise Attorney General Christian Porter.

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