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# 0 **Book by moms of murdered children offers help and hope: Anne Reeves**

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(<http://connect.pennlive.com/staff/amreeves/index.html>) By **Anne Reeves** | [areeves@pennlive.com](mailto:areeves@pennlive.com)  
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on November 22, 2013 at 9:46 AM, updated November 22, 2013 at 6:04 PM

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For eight long years, Lynn Shiner could not celebrate Christmas. No trees, no decorations, no presents, no holiday cookies, no Santa. Especially no Santa.

Her dad finally persuaded the Harrisburg woman to host the family's Christmas dinner, saying he wanted to spend the holiday with his children – all his children. She spent Christmas Eve praying that it would snow so hard nobody could come.

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Amazingly – and uncharacteristically in central Pennsylvania – it actually did start snowing. As Shiner walked outside, she noticed something written on her driveway in

the new-fallen snow: the letters: “d” and “s.” They were unmistakable. And they were

News20award-

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for. Snead: Lynn's son, who along with his sister, Jennifer, was murdered by her ex-husband on Christmas Day 1994. Dave was only 8; Jen was 10. Tom Snead also killed himself. “I had felt signs from my kids from the very beginning,” Shiner said. “And I felt this was a sign from Dave telling me it was OK to celebrate Christmas.”

Anne Reeves

Shiner and Nancy Chavez, another mother whose only child was brutally murdered by a loved one, have written a book, “Stabbed in the Heart,” along with Patriot-News award-winning columnist Nancy Eshelman.

Chavez's daughter, **Randi Trimble, 28, was stabbed to death in 2003**

([http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/05/notorious\\_murders\\_randi\\_trimble.html](http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/05/notorious_murders_randi_trimble.html)) in a scheme hatched by her husband to collect \$100,000 in life insurance. He and the hit man he hired are both serving life in prison.

“At first I didn't know why they labeled my daughter's murder as domestic violence because I knew there was no violence between Randi and her husband,” Chavez said, herself the former victim of domestic abuse. “It took me quite a few years to realize that the abuse was psychological. He was controlling. He abused Randi by not being true to her and not revealing his true self to her.”

Even though the circumstances surrounding the murders were very different, Shiner and Chavez channeled their grief in very similar ways. Both vowed to keep their children's memories alive by becoming strong, outspoken advocates for victims' rights.

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They admit they are different people today from the ones who had to bury their children those many long years ago.

## The crime victims admit they are different people today from the ones who had to bury their children so many long years ago.

### Shiner serves as director of the Office of Victims' Services

([http://www.pennlive.com/east-shore/index.ssf/2013/07/penbrook\\_leos\\_club.html](http://www.pennlive.com/east-shore/index.ssf/2013/07/penbrook_leos_club.html)) with the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Her office distributes more than \$40 million in state and federal funds to help crime victims with everything from funeral expenses to counseling. She is nationally recognized for her tireless work on behalf of victims and their families.

Shiner was also instrumental in enacting the "Jen and Dave Law," establishing the nation's first statewide automated system for providing criminal-charge information to parents involved in child custody cases. Before the murders, Shiner had no idea her ex-husband had been charged with stalking another woman.

Chavez started Randi's Race, a 5K Run/Walk for Hope and Courage that has raised \$271,000 for domestic violence services in Cumberland and Perry counties. She also established Randi's House of Angels, which provides services for traumatized children.

Their children would be proud.

The women wrote the book to let "victims and survivors know they're not alone," Chavez said.

But it also provides guidance for other groups -- the media, the clergy, family and friends -- on how to deal with the unthinkable. Most of us avoid the subject altogether, Shiner said, because we just can't -- or won't -- face such pain and grief.

"It's important to be able to listen and be with them in the moment. It's not about saying the right words. Even just saying 'I'm sorry about what happened to you,' helps validate what they're feeling," Shiner said.

"People often think that because someone has died, you should never mention their name again. But that's more hurtful. I like hearing my children's names."

Writing the book has not been easy, both women agree. Researching the book forced them to relive the murders all over again. Even after 19 and 10 years, the pain is still unbearable.

"One of my assignments was to find out what Randi was doing on the day she was killed; I had to walk in her footsteps," Chavez said.

"I learned my daughter had a very good day at work in a job she loved, had a great conversation with her best friend at lunchtime and was ready to go to her second job. It wasn't a tough day for her and she never expected what happened when she walked into her home. That was comforting for me."

Shiner remembers knocking on her ex-husband's door when she went to pick up her children on that Christmas Day and getting no answer. Any other time, she says, she would have opened the door and walked right in. But something stopped her from going in that day, and for that she has always been grateful.

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Lynn Shiner and Nancy Chavez, mothers of murdered children, have written a book, "Stabbed in the Heart," along with Patriot-News columnist Nancy Eshelman.

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“I can’t imagine what it would have been like to walk in the house and see them,” she said.

For Eshelman, the book became more than just a writing project. It became personal. Never one to shy away from tackling tough subjects in her weekly columns, she bravely decided to share her own horrific experience.

“I had left an abusive marriage and my ex was stalking me constantly. I was so terrified of him, I would only take showers when it was light out. I was afraid to be helpless in the dark,” Eshelman said.

“One night I was in my apartment with a friend. He climbed a trellis, saw I wasn’t alone, drove back home and got a gun. He then broke into my apartment and killed my friend. My kids were asleep in their rooms. My girlfriend and I cleaned blood and brain matter off the floor because there were no resources at that time to help me.”

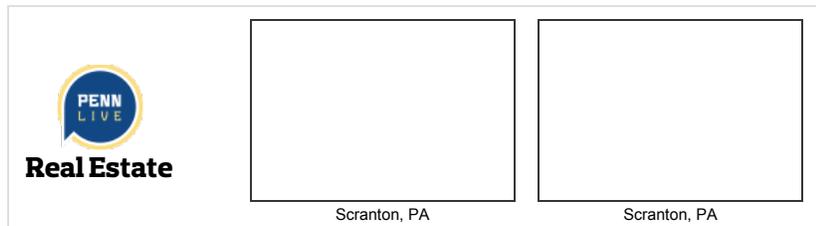
Tragically, domestic violence continues to ravage the lives of many men, women and children throughout Pennsylvania. Some victims, like those featured in "Stabbed in the Heart," die at the hands of their abusers.

But because of the persistent efforts of people like Lynn Shiner and Nancy Chavez, victims now have more protections, more rights and more services than ever before.

Law enforcement, judges, advocates, family, and friends also now better understand that “domestic” violence isn’t just a domestic issue. It affects all of us in some way.

For more information on the book and to order, go to [www.rjdblessings.com](http://www.rjdblessings.com) (<http://www.rjdblessings.com/>).

*This article has been updated.*



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