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Ray and Alicia Williams pose in front of a portrait of their deceased daughter, Jennifer Cameron. Jennifer was murdered by her husband in January 2001. He committed suicide afterward.

*Kurt Hostetler / The Star Press*

## Parents hope others learn from their tragedy

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HARTFORD CITY - The signs of domestic violence were there, but Ray and Alicia Williams didn't see them until their daughter had become a statistic.

Photos of Jennifer Williams Cameron, an only child and a 30-year-old mother of three, show an attractive woman with a pretty smile.

Her father said she was excited about the prospect of moving her family into a new home. But before that could happen, she was shot and killed by her husband on Jan 16, 2001. He then committed suicide.

Jennifer will be remembered Saturday through a 5K walk/run to raise funds to help other domestic violence victims.

"We didn't even know our daughter was being abused until the kids told their counselor," Williams said. "Two young lives were lost, and the oldest child came to us and asked who was going to take care of them. A six-year-old shouldn't ever have to ask that."

### **'I should have known'**

Even the casual observer can see the guilt Ray and Alicia Williams carry with them wherever they go.

"I promised Jennifer when she was born that I would always take care of her," said her mother, Alicia. "I feel guilty that as a mother I should have known something was wrong. I held her as they turned off the life support system and apologized to her," she said clutching the pendant bearing Jennifer's picture she has worn since her daughter died.

No, they didn't pull the trigger, but neither did the Williamses see the warning signs. Now they want to make sure everyone is aware of domestic violence and that everyone is aware of the signs.

"What helped us get through everything," Ray said, "is our faith in God, our church, our minister Rev. Ken Crouch and the members of the Eden United Church of Christ, our friends and family. Without the support of these people I'm not sure we would have made it through."

Instead of spending their retirement at the lake or on a golf course the Williamses are adding onto their Hartford City house and settling into the routine of raising their daughter's children, whom they have adopted.

"Raising grandchildren takes some adjusting," Ray said. "We had an empty nest for a long while, and we used to let the rules slide a little. But we're all getting along fine, and the kids are doing well in school."

"They do have their moments when they miss their mother," Alicia said.

### **Getting the word out**

The Williamses are talking about the death of their only child now in hopes of preventing other tragic deaths, and to draw attention to this Saturday's fundraiser, Jennifer's Run.

Jennifer was a member of the Psi Iota Xi sorority, according to race director Teresa Basey. "The race is our way of honoring her and to raise funds to assist other domestic abuse victims."

In addition to the race, the Williamses are also speaking out to raise awareness of domestic violence.

"We want to get the word out to parents and tell them to find out what is going on in their kids' lives," Ray said, "and to make themselves aware of domestic violence and its signs."

Ray is speaking to a group of police officers soon to help them understand the sensitivity of domestic violence and how it affects families.

Ray and Alicia also want parents of abuse victims to see and recognize the signs they missed, and "to be assertive."

"People being abused won't talk about it," he said. "Jennifer's husband controlled her and the children by threatening to do harm to us if they told anyone."

Those signs include but are not limited to suddenly not showing up for long periods of time, making excuses for bruises, wearing long sleeves and extra make-up to cover bruises and making up odd explanations for bruises and for crying seemingly without reason.

"Jennifer displayed some of those signs," Ray said, "but we didn't recognize them."

*Contact Jay and Blackford county reporter Ric Routledge at (765) 728-5241.*

## **Jennifer's Run**

- **WHAT:** Jennifer's Run, a flat course 5K run/walk to raise funds to help victims of domestic violence
- **WHEN:** 9 a.m. Saturday, during Heritage Days festival. Check-in begins at 7:30 a.m.
- **WHERE:** Starts at 211 N. High St., Hartford City.
- **TO ENTER:** Entry forms can be picked up at any branch of the Citizens First State Bank or by calling (765) 348-4584.
- **COST:** Pre-race entry fee is \$12, the day of the race, \$14.
- **INFORMATION:** (765) 348-4584.

## **Coming tomorrow**

- Survivors of domestic abuse share their own insights