

what
NO ONE else
by: cecelia wilson **KNOWS**
:the wade knox story

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Of the Knox children, Wade was the youngest...and was by the far the most troubled. Since the age of 5, the young boy had major issues socially and academically. He threw tantrums, had no respect for authority and had numerous "accidents." In kindergarten Wade was diagnosed with dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder and his parents knew he would have to face enormous obstacles in his life. Throughout his formative years, Wade came home with bruises, stitches and, worst of all, in the 8th grade Wade lost an eye. He always provided an excuse, but the angry outbursts and non-social behavior was baffling to his parents, who struggled to find help. The Knox's took their child to therapists, psychologists and counselors. By the time he entered 4th grade, he had spent a year in Little Rock at the Center for Youth and Families, only to see the anger resurface by his 5th grade year. But, the answer, the source of their child's rage, was provided to Karen Knox and her husband on Wade's 18th birthday when he brought his Uncle Jack Walls, his scoutmaster, to his parents at gunpoint. Facing his parents, he looked to his uncle and demanded, "Tell them what you've done to me all of my life."

For thirteen years, Wade had lived with a secret that would prove to not only change his behavior, but rule his entire life. He would never outlive the damage done to his psyche. And while knowing the "why?" behind their child's disturbed soul explained so much in his life, the damage was irreversible. Since entering cub scouts, Wade and many other young boys had been exposed to a scoutmaster who will now be spending his life in prison. Karen Knox learned of the threats Walls made against her son should he ever tell of the events that happened during camping trips. She tells of the injuries her son suffered at his uncle's hands for so many years, including the eye Wade lost as a young boy. Hindsight explains incidents in Wade's life. "This explains that look," she relates when remembering former times of trouble. But explanations do little in permanently healing a life.

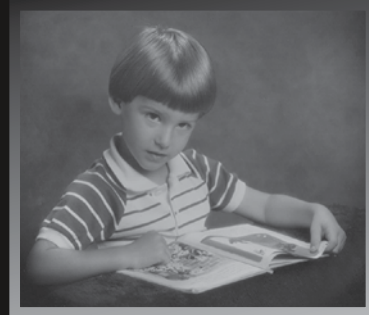
Wade was one of many boys who had lived through the scout leader's abuse. Uncovering the secret explained so many troubled youths, and while some individuals were able to recover some degree of normalcy, other young boys were not. Heath Stocks is perhaps one of the most well-known of those affected by Walls' hold on his life. In January 1997, 20-year-old Heath Stocks killed his father, mother and sister after 10 years of child abuse and control at the hands of Jack Walls. But, it would be another year before the community of Lonoke would know the background of those killings and only then would they realize that a pedophile had been for years continuing a cycle of child abuse by deceiving parents

who had entrusted their sons into his care. In 1998, Charles "Jack" Walls III pled guilty to five counts of rape and no contest to one count of raping Heath Stocks. He was eventually sentenced to three life terms, plus three forty-year terms, to be served concurrently.

Putting Walls behind bars ended the abuse of future scouts in the Lonoke community, but it could not save those who had fallen under his power for the years he had gained their parents' confidence. "We had hoped that after [Walls'] trial and imprisonment Wade would be able to piece his life back together. But, he never recovered," Karen says with regret. "There was just so much trauma. He developed paranoid schizophrenia. Jack had created such a fear in him. He constantly had nightmares; he developed voices." Wade continued to live in fear that Walls would somehow return for him. College was out of the question for the teenager - he simply couldn't cope. He continued to live with his parents, but had trouble holding a job and finding his way in life. He would tell his family he was going to Wal-Mart and would be back in a little while, but instead he would disappear for two to three days at a time. When they would ask their son where he had been, he couldn't tell them; he would have simply blocked out that time. He hallucinated. He was very suspicious of people. He became extremely paranoid and was constantly worrying about his parents' safety. This was because of the constant threats he had always received from Jack.

For Heath Stocks, the affects of a decade of child abuse resulted in the murders of his own family members at his hands. Heath confessed to the murders and is currently serving three consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole. For Wade Knox, however, the abuse led to his death. Wade's sister had just had a baby and the Knox's planned to stay with their daughter and new grandchild for a couple of days. Wade assured them he would be fine; others had promised to check in on Wade during their absence. But the ghosts that haunted Wade returned and Karen received a phone call at her daughter's home - Wade had committed suicide. He was 23 years old.

So many lives had been changed due to the actions of one man and Karen Knox was no exception. She had experienced the worst loss of all, but her own life would change in ways she could not have comprehended, and that change would be one that would breathe new life into what had been a devastating series of events. Karen had been a first grade teacher for 31 years, but her life's work would be redirected one day at a wedding. "I was sitting at



Above: Wade Knox growing up.

the wedding reception of one of Jack's victims," Karen remembers, "when a woman I know came up to me and told me that they wanted to start a Child Advocacy Center in Lonoke and said I could name it. I named it the Wade Knox Child Advocacy Center. At the end of that school year, Karen retired from teaching and became the center's director. "This is not a job," Karen says with emotion, "it is a calling."

The Wade Knox Child Advocacy Center is open to children 18 and under suffering from any type of abuse. After a report has been made to the Child Abuse Hotline, an interview room is provided and a trained forensic interviewer simply allows the child to talk freely. Law enforcement officers observe from closed circuit television. Information is provided on mental health providers and abuse victims can have medical exams set up. The center's website (www.wadeknoxcenter.org)

also provides parents with a list of potential signs of sexual and physical abuse. There are currently only nine centers in Arkansas, but Karen and her staff worked with Harding and DHS to open a much-needed center in Searcy for White County victims. Karen's position pro-

vides a new focus to her life: "The most fulfilling aspect is that I know how kids and parents hurt and I can help leave them with a sense of hope. *Yes, you can survive this and you will be OK.*"

The help Wade needed was too late in coming, but his life can help others watch for the early warning signs. Parents can never be too trusting and can never be too cautious. As cited on the Wade Knox Center's website, 90% of all

victims know their perpetrators. Jack Walls was a well-respected citizen, loved and trusted by the scouting families that he served and, in Wade's case, he was a loving member of his victim's own family. As a parent, if you believe something is wrong, don't stop digging until you have the answers to what is troubling your child. "I had prayed to God to help me find out what was wrong with my child for thirteen years and then I learned the answer in a blink," Karen says. But God has now placed her in a position

with an experience and knowledge to help hundreds of children who may be facing something similar to what her son faced. "I remember once Wade asked me, 'Why didn't God take care of me?' and I told him, 'God did. He put an end to it.'"

"This is NOT a job,"
"It is a calling."

Log onto searcyliving.com for a link to the new Child Safety Center in Searcy and please read the next story on page 66 titled *House of Hope*



Above: Karen Knox (Wade Knox's Mother)



Below: The Wade Knox Child Advocacy Center