



110 S. Hartford, Suite 1008, Tulsa, OK 74120

918-902-7798

colleen@okappleseed.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Colleen McCarty, Esq.

Founding Executive Director

colleen@okappleseed.org

918-902-7798

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### **Oklahoma Appleseed announces true-crime podcast series designed to highlight the stories of victims of domestic violence who are sentenced to prison**

*The first episode of the season is available June 28, 2022 and examines the case of April Wilkens—imprisoned for killing her boyfriend Terry Carlton, son of Tulsan Don Carlton.*

TULSA, OK - The Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, part of the nationwide Appleseed Network, has announced a true crime podcast series called Panic Button that focuses on domestic violence victims unfairly prosecuted by the Oklahoma justice system and currently trapped in prison. The first season will be released June 28, 2022 and examines the shooting death of the son of local car dealer Don Carlton by his ex-fiance, April Wilkens.

Oklahoma Appleseed opened in March 2022 and recently announced the appointment of Colleen McCarty as its founding executive director. McCarty is an attorney and criminal justice advocate and previous deputy director of Oklahomans for Criminal Reform. McCarty co-hosts Panic Button with local attorney and advocate, Leslie Briggs.

Appleseed hopes the podcast – and Wilkens case specifically – will raise awareness of unjust incarceration of victims of domestic violence. OK Appleseed is interested in researching and supporting legislative solutions that would consider a defendant's history of abuse at sentencing and provide sentencing relief for those already inside. One of Appleseed's first Oklahoma policy initiatives will be to address





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the criminalization of domestic abuse survivors who are incarcerated as a result of protecting themselves from abusive partners. It is estimated that more than 500 prisoners incarcerated in Oklahoma prisons are domestic violence survivors who defended themselves from injury, rape or death. Survivors are often ignored early in the domestic violence cycle because our current system ineffectively responds to repeat domestic incidents. Oklahoma Appleseed hopes to run a bill that will allow those who have survived abuse to receive a shorter sentence if their crime relates to protecting themselves from continued abuse.

Wilkins met Terry Carlton while shopping for a car at one of his father's dealerships. Within months Wilkins and Carlton were in a romantic relationship that turned sexually and physically abusive. Repeated physical abuse, drug use, rape, and theft resulted in a series of calls by Wilkins to law enforcement and multiple emergency protective orders issued on Wilkins' behalf. Neither were effective at stopping Wilkins' abuser from stalking, harassing, threatening, and assaulting her.

Despite, the documented and corroborated abuse, Wilkins has been in prison 25 years and has been denied parole four times. Wilkins, her attorneys, and her supporters allege undue influence from Terry Carlton's father, Don Carlton, played a significant role in her prison term and continued incarceration.

Appleseed intends to tell the entire story of April Wilkins' case for the first time and highlight it as an example for the Oklahoma Legislature to change sentencing where domestic abuse is documented.

The podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and all major streaming sites starting June 28th.





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Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is a non-profit pro bono law firm that fights for the rights and opportunities of every Oklahoman. As the newest member of the broader Appleseed Network—with centers in 17 states and Mexico—Oklahoma Appleseed is in the middle of defining its policy areas and strategic goals. Building a coalition to protect and uplift criminalized survivors of intimate violence is one of the Center’s founding projects.

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**Additional Materials**

**April Wilkens bio**

**Q & A**

**Timeline**

