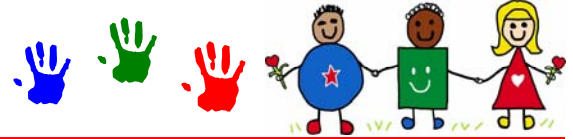


Handprints

Volume 3 Fall 2006

A Newsletter of the Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County



Joining forces to combat the problem of child abuse

Smith County agencies working together for the smallest victims

Trials involving child victims of sexual abuse have been covered by the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* numerous times throughout the summer. All of these cases were worked through the Children's Advocacy Center and by the multi-disciplinary team of professionals that investigate child sexual abuse in Smith County.

In **April**, a 24 year old Alabama man pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 75 years in prison by a jury for sexually assaulting a 12 year old girl in a Greyhound bus bathroom. A 39 year old woman pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 20 years in prison by a jury for a sexual relationship she had with her 14 year old stepson who fathered her child. In **May**, a 49 year old Flint man was sentenced to life in prison for aggravated sexual assault of a 3 year old girl in the closet of his garage.

In **June**, a former high school biology teacher was convicted of sexual assault of a child for having a sexual relationship with a 16 year old student. He was sentenced to five years probation, although the jury claimed they thought their verdict would send him to prison for 10 years. In **July**, a 58 year old preacher and owner of a local daycare was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for aggravated sexual assault of a 6 year old girl during naptime. A 41 year old man pleaded guilty and was sentenced to seven years in prison for sexually assaulting his teenage daughter. The victim testified that every time she wanted to do something with her friends, she would have to have sex with her father first.

In these six cases the perpetrators were collectively sentenced to 102 years in prison plus two life sentences. While going through the criminal justice system, the children, their siblings and protective parents were able to rely on the support and services available from the therapists and social workers on staff at the Children's Advocacy Center.

"Investigating and prosecuting child abuse cases is incredibly difficult for everyone involved. For the Criminal District Attor-



Children's Advocacy Center multi-disciplinary team members left to right: Denise Chalk, Smith County Sheriff's Office, Kim Waites, Connie Mendez, Yolanda Love, CPS, Chuck Houghton, Smith County Sheriff's Office, Paul Robeson, Kyle Rhodes, Tyler Police Department. Not pictured Tammy Hooley, Jason Gillentine, CPS, Sue Hinson, TMFHS, Kathleen Young, Angela Cabaniss, ETMC, April Sikes, Smith County Criminal D.A.'s Office.

Office to effectively prosecute perpetrators in these cases, the evidence has to be very strong. The work done by the CAC team provides a solid foundation for the prosecution and at the same time tremendously reduces the trauma to these young victims," says Matt Bingham, Smith County Criminal District Attorney.

The collaboration of agencies working through the Children's Advocacy Center gives the investigators the opportunity to share information in a rare format, thereby strengthening the cases. The common goal of everyone involved is a love for children, a passion for justice and a vision for restored childhoods.

Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County Partner Agencies

Bullard Police Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Smith County Criminal District Attorney's Office
Trinity Mother Frances Health System

Child Protective Services
Lindale Police Department
Smith County Sheriff's Office
Troup Police Department
Whitehouse Police Department

East Texas Medical Center Regional
Healthcare System
Overton Police Department
Texas Rangers
Tyler Police Department

Carol's edge

In our mission, the results count . . .

The Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County is dedicated to child victims of physical and sexual abuse and strives to reduce trauma

Through sessions conducted by the child therapist, 80% of child abuse victims will experience a decrease in trauma related symptoms

through a unified effort that facilitates thorough investigations, effective prosecutions

With the multi-agency team approach to child abuse investigations, true bill disposition of child abuse cases by the grand jury will be maintained at 67%.

The cover story confirms the benefits of the coordinated approach to abuse investigations. Specialized training of team members and sharing of expertise and professional knowledge result in stronger cases.

and the healing of the children and their families.

Through sessions conducted by the protective caregiver therapist, 80% of caregivers will show an increase in the level of protection of the children and 90% will report increased awareness of the dynamics of abuse, victimization and prevention.

Through safety actions provided by the team, 75% of the children and their families will show an increase in personal and family safety.

At the end of the day, what we do matters to the children...it matters to the community.

--Carol Langston
Executive Director

Healing children and their families

Through the child and protective caregiver therapy programs

The therapy program at the Children's Advocacy Center offers specialized therapy at no charge to children and protective parents or caregivers who have experienced trauma as the result of physical or sexual abuse. The child therapist and protective caregiver therapist offer play therapy, individual, family and group therapies as well as expressive therapies including music and art. Therapy services are provided by full time mental health professionals who are licensed, board certified or registered in the State of Texas. Referrals for therapy services come directly from partner agencies allowing therapists to intervene at the earliest point of crisis.

"The therapy sessions provided a look into our family's structure and problems. Thank you to the therapist for his views and advice on our difficult situation."

-Father whose 15 year-old daughter was sexually abused

Learning about abuse can disrupt a family's home life. If the perpetrator was financially supporting the family and is incarcerated, not only is there a loss of income but also a dramatic shift in the family's dynamics. The therapy program provides a caring support system for these hurting families. *Mother of a 15 year old sexual abuse victim says, "The CAC has been a tremendous blessing to our family. The staff has provided us with much needed care, concern, and direction."*

Therapy can help shed light on a family's areas of weakness and can serve as a catalyst for positive change. *"My son and I are closer because of how we have learned to communicate. We are both healthier and happier," says a mother whose 4 year-old son was neglected.*

Upon learning of their children's abuse, parents often blame themselves and are uncertain of how to best help their children cope. Therapy services assist families in gaining the skills necessary to begin healing. *"The therapy has helped me feel more secure about my children's well-being. I feel like I have access to competent, knowledgeable people," says mother of 13 year old sexual abuse victim.*

**From January 1 to September 30, 2006
The CAC has investigated **392** cases with **545** children
and an additional **402** secondary victims. **63** children
and **79** adults have received therapy services.**

Thank you for your continued support...



Capital One celebrated its grand opening in Tyler with a pancake stacking contest for non-profit organizations on August 26 at their new building on Hwy 155 and Loop 323.



Jen and Jason Gillentine served as the official stackers for the CAC. Jen is a CAC volunteer and Jason is a Child Protective Services Supervisor housed at the CAC. They won fifth place and \$250.



When CAC board member and KLTN Channel 7 anchor Gillian Sheridan won the Longview News Journal's award for favorite anchor, she chose for the \$1,000 prize to benefit the CAC. Pictured is Carol Langston, Executive Director and Gillian Sheridan along with CAC staff and team.



Wal-Mart Supercenter donated \$1,000 to the CAC Executive Director Carol Langston and Wal-Mart Supercenter representative Connie Cates.



Hide-a-Way Lake Kiwanis Club donated \$ 500 to the CAC's Rainbow Room. CAC Executive Director Carol Langston and Hide-a-Way Lake Kiwanis representative Lou Palmer.



The Quilter's Guild with Woodmen of the World Insurance makes beautiful quilts for the children who are served by the CAC. Pictured are Jason Gillentine and Tammy Hooley with CPS and Laura Cauthron, CAC staff.



St. John's Masonic Lodge's donation of stuffed animals to the CAC's Teddy Bear Alley!



"Project Linus" regularly donates hand-made quilts and afghans to the CAC's Rainbow Room. Pictured is Pat Van Derwater.



Jason Gillentine, CPS, Jason Isham, CAC staff, Kyle Rhodes, Tyler Police Department and Carol Langston, CAC Executive Director. Judy Smith (center) is with the Quilter's Guild.



Smith County Young Lawyer's Association presented the CAC a check for \$1,500. Pictured are Carol Langston, CAC Executive Director, with Debbie Gunter and Allen Gardner.



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organization and welcomes contributions.



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