



A Newsletter of the Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County
Investigation, Prosecution, Justice and Healing for the Victims of Child Abuse



Are You "The One"?

Written by Mandy Countryman
CAC Community Educator



One in three girls and one in five boys are sexually abused by their 18th birthday in Smith County. This startling statistic should be powerful enough to entice adults to stand up for the most innocent of human beings; however, the greatest challenge is that it is such an ugly subject that most people have a hard time wanting to acknowledge it. This is why it's so important that teachers, coaches, youth-serving organizations and the general public learn the signs of sexual abuse. All adults, not just parents, need to know where to get help.

The Texas Attorney General's Office recently partnered with Children's Advocacy Centers™ of Texas, Inc. to launch the *One With Courage* campaign. The goal is to raise awareness and educate Texans about the signs of sexual abuse, dispel generally accepted "myths" about this issue and provide communities with specific steps they can take to make a difference in a child's life. "As adults, we cannot possibly expect children to have the courage to talk about abuse if we do not have the courage to openly discuss this horrific problem. Like these little victims, we must all be One With Courage," said Attorney General of Texas, Greg Abbott.

This campaign aims to inspire the courage required to take action against child sexual abuse, whether it be starting a dialogue about this issue, equipping adults with the knowledge needed to recognize the signs of abuse, or volunteering at a local children's advocacy center. You may learn more by visiting www.onewithcourage.org.

Sexual abuse may be the most underreported form of abuse because adults often lure children into secrecy, shame and silence. Do not expect there to be obvious signs when a child is being sexually abused. In many cases, the signs are often emotional and behavioral, not physical or verbal. Some indicators of child sexual abuse may include unexplained injuries, changes in behavior, fear of going home, change in eating or sleeping, lack of hygiene and risk-taking behaviors.

Long-term consequences of child abuse include: mental health problems, educational difficulties, substance abuse and employment problems.

Without intervention, children who experience child abuse or neglect are 53% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile. The Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County enables victims to become valuable members of society.

This is a crime of secrecy because children are afraid to talk. They are afraid their loved ones will be taken away from them or they have been threatened by the perpetrator. The number one reason adults are apprehensive in reporting suspected child abuse is fear of retaliation. There may be a fear of legal action, repercussions from the accused offender, embarrassment or lack of trust in the child making the outcry.

Sexual abuse, in particular, is generally discovered after a child makes an outcry. The most important thing that can happen if a child does make an outcry of sexual abuse is not to question the child but to keep them in a safe environment until appropriate authorities are notified. Anyone "having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect" must report the case to any state or local law enforcement agency AND to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$1,000. (Texas Family Code, Chapter 34)

The most common myth regarding child sexual abuse is the public assumption that a person who looks and acts normal simply cannot be a child molester. The misconception is that only bogeymen are child molesters; although 90% of child victims know their perpetrator. The people most likely to abuse a child are the ones with the most opportunity, most access, and most trust. It must also be known that sexual abuse crosses all socio-economic, neighborhood, race and class barriers. In essence, child abuse knows no boundaries and happens in all communities.

(See "The One" continued on next page.)

A Word From Our President



It is my pleasure to update you about our Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County. This message, however, is bittersweet.

I have seen firsthand the incredible quality of the programs and the efforts of our staff, Child Protective Services, law enforcement, district attorney and medical agency partners who together fight to end child abuse within our community. We educate children and adults about recognizing/reporting abuse through school/church programs and assist/counsel those children that have been abused.

Imagine the traumatic journey of a child who must travel through a legal system designed for adults. That child then needs to begin the healing process from the nightmare of being sexually and/or physically abused. Now picture that the average age of this child is a mere seven years of age. We provide a child friendly environment to make that child's path a little easier to walk.

The sad part of this message is that there is a need within our community to have the Children's Advocacy Center in existence at all. This January marks our 15th year of service to Smith County. Since 1996, your local center has coordinated and investigated over 5,481 cases of alleged child abuse. That is over one new case a day, every single day for the 15 years we have been in existence. We have provided services for 7,725 children and counseling for 1,081 of them. There is even a sadder part to this story - many cases of abuse go unreported and never reach us for assistance.

If you have given financially or with your volunteer hours to the center over the years, let me take this opportunity to thank you for supporting our work. A portion of our funding is derived from grants provided to us by various governmental agencies and foundations. Many of those grants are matching contributions to those monies raised locally. Your donations to the center not only help us directly with our expenses but also allow us to obtain additional grants that would not otherwise be available for our services.

Our growth in services to our children now requires an expansion and renovation of our facility on the Frankston Highway. A capital drive to fund this expansion is being planned. If you can see it in your heart to assist us in making a difference to the children in our community, we would be most appreciative for your support.

I assure you that our mission now, as it has always been, is to protect our children from these heinous acts of abuse, assist our agency partners in the investigation and prosecution of those who dare to abuse a child and to make Smith County, Texas a better place to live.

My thanks to all of you,

Steve Manley
President

Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County

"Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime."
- Herbert Ward

"The One" continued from page 1.

The responsibility of the community is to come together in support of children and families that are impacted by child abuse. The long-term goal is to change societal norms allowing a more open dialogue about the issue while making appropriate help, support and accountability readily available to those who have been victimized, to those who have harmed children, and to the families of both. A child shouldn't be left responsible for coming forward to prevent abuse. Most importantly, kids generally won't speak out unless they know that adults will keep them safe.

You can turn your fear into confidence by learning the warning signs. You can get past the fears and silence that prevent us from taking action to protect our kids. You can become the **One With Courage** ...



The CAC's Community Educator, Mandy Countryman, is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a BA in Communications. Mandy has experience working with the media, and in marketing and public relations.

Brookshire's



The CAC would like to thank ALL of the 2010 Bids For Kids sponsors, auction item donors, bidders and volunteers for their support in raising over \$60,000. We would also like to give a special thanks to our Diamond Sponsor, Brookshire Grocery Company.

"Brookshire's mission is to provide a great food and shopping experience. Outside our stores we continue a tradition of philanthropic and volunteer work by donating money, product, and hours of service to more than 800 non-profit groups per year. Brookshire's strives to promote opportunities that benefit children and families", says Sam Lanier, with Brookshire's Community and Consumer Relations.



**2010 Bids For Kids
Presenting Sponsor**



**2010 Bids For Kids
Crystal Sponsor**

Watch your mailbox....
Turkey Cards will begin arriving
November 1st



From January 1 to August 31, 2010, the CAC investigated 173 cases with 241 children and an additional 401 siblings and protective caregivers. 47 children and 60 caregivers received therapy services.

**The Christmas Holidays
Are Right Around The Corner**

If you are interested in "adopting" a low income family that has received services this year from the CAC, please contact Jennifer at (903)533-1880 or email jennifer@cacsmithcounty.org by November 12, 2010.

“A Fresh Start...”

Written By Rebecca Cunio,
CAC Kids In Court Coordinator

There is a feeling I sometimes get when I know that a moment will inevitably change my life's perspective. It is a feeling that someone or something is special about an encounter and I, for whatever reason, am supposed to pay attention. As an employee of the Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County, I regularly encounter such moments, hearing personal stories of hope, healing, and triumph. On one particular day, sitting at my cluttered office desk, shuffling through paperwork- the intercom of my telephone buzzes unexpectedly. I am told that there is a family of clients in need of assistance filing for Crime Victim's Compensation (CVC) benefits and they are waiting in the conference room. Upon gathering a CVC application and a brochure detailing the rights of crime victims, I do not realize I am walking towards one such moment.

To briefly explain, the Crime Victim's Compensation (CVC) Program is administered by the Office of the Attorney General and was implemented in 1979. The program receives funding by collecting revenue from convicted offenders in the form of traffic fines, criminal court costs, restitution, and parolee fees. These funds allow the program to provide financial assistance to victims of violent crime, which includes sexual assault. Because sexual victimization is residual, a child's disclosure will inevitably affect every member of the home by causing emotional distress, uprooting home environments, severing personal relationships, and creating undue financial hardship. The Kids in Court Program at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Smith County works closely with clients to explain the Crime Victims Compensation Program and to help families secure much needed assistance.

Walking into the conference room, information in hand, I am greeted by a family of four. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell (name has been changed) sit, holding hands behind the table, with their two teenage daughters laughing in conversation behind them. At first glance this appears to be a family much like any other but as we continue to talk I realize the unique state of crisis that they are currently in. Both of the girls have been victims of sexual abuse. The perpetrator, in fact, lives on the very same property as the Mitchell's in a home close by. And to make matters worse, the perpetrator is also the Mitchell's landlord. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell wholeheartedly believe and support their girls and are desperately hoping to find means to move away from the perpetrator. With Mr. Mitchell suffering physical disability, Mrs. Mitchell is the sole provider for the home financially and so it did not seem feasible for them to move.

I spent about thirty minutes visiting with the Mitchell's in our conference room that afternoon. I was so moved by their strength and courage and could not help but feel enlightened by their sheer gratitude and optimistic disposition. Over the course of a few weeks the CAC staff became very involved with the Mitchell family, providing them with school clothes and supplies from the Rainbow Room and interacting with each of them on visits to the center for counseling and family advocacy.

The family had completed their application for Crime Victim's Compensation and was anticipating a response from the Office of the Attorney General regarding which benefits they would be eligible to receive, hoping that relocation expenses would be one of them. The family had identified a home where they planned to move if they could receive the benefits.

The day soon came, when I gladly placed a phone call to Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell. Just past the first ring, Mrs. Mitchell's voice resounded on the other end. "Hello," she chimes. I am so thrilled to deliver the news that I begin immediately, "Mrs. Mitchell, after speaking with the Attorney General's Office and the realty company, I am happy to tell you that your family can start moving into your new home." Through the cold end of the telephone receiver I am filled with such warmth. I can hear Mrs. Mitchell's voice lighting up as she tries to speak, choking back tears, "really?" she asks. I then hear her call out to her family, "we can move!" Laughing and crying at the same time she thanks me repeatedly. Insisting that she does not need to thank me Mrs. Mitchell replies, "it was a miracle finding the people at your center. Thank you for giving our family a fresh start."

I found tears rolling down my own cheeks as I hung up the telephone. I sat still in my office reflecting on what had just happened. The Mitchell's lives were changed. They were changed not just by what the Crime Victim's Compensation Program gave them but by what the Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County gave them. I always knew the type of work that I was involved in was special, but at that moment I thought about each of the people I work with and I saw them through the eyes of our clients: *the family advocate*- who, through diligent advocacy and community relationships, secures the most basic of family needs and who gives victims their voice to fight back, *the rainbow room coordinator*- who spends hours unloading and organizing donations that have sent so many children to school feeling confident, despite what their home lives were like, *the therapists*- who listen empathetically to each individual family member, in turn teaching them self worth and slowly uncovering the light in their eyes, and *the victims assistance coordinator*- who took the time to make a single phone call to secure free family movie passes so that two teenage girls can experience what it's like to be a care-free teen, if only for a couple of hours. I believe Mrs. Mitchell was right about a miracle having happened. What happened was an amazing and wonderful event, as goes the definition of miracle, and I am so grateful to have been a part of it.

This article was written by the CAC's Kids in Court Coordinator, Becky Cunio. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Houston. Becky was a Child Protective Services Investigator before coming to the CAC in 2008.



We are grateful many contributed

February 1, 2010 – August 31, 2010

Adagio Dermatology & Aesthetics
Dr. Laura J. Haygood

Ann and Warren Abrameit

Anonymous

Paul Arnold

Bess and Jim Arnold

Austin Bank

Mr. and Mrs. Upton Beall

Anonymous

Darla Bennett

Dr. Jonathan and Cristina Blau

Boone & Boone Construction LTD

Vicki and Lindsey Bradley

Brookshire Grocery Co.

Melvina and Herb Buie

Donna and Rusty Bundy

V'Ann and Donn Byrne

Capital One

Anonymous

Chick-fil-A

Clark & Porter

Alexis and Scotty Combest

Communities Foundation of Texas

Donor Advised Fund of

Linda C. Buford

Tammy and Joe Conflitti

Laura and Matthew Culver

Dobbs & Tittle, P.C.

East Texas Communities Foundation

Donor Advised Funds of—

Frances and Thomas Swann

Marilyn and John Glass

Anonymous

Joyce Buford

Cecil and Bernie Ward

June and Tom Lowery

East Texas Medical Center Regional
Healthcare System

East Texas Seed Co.

Margaret and John Moss

Grace and John English

Anonymous

Gail Evans

Food Fast Children's Charities

Anonymous

Foy and Mia Forehand

Barbara and John Gabriel

Robert "Ace" Gallop

Margarita de la Garza-Graham, MD

Debby and Eric Gunter

Norma Edge Halfpenny

Hall Buick Pontiac GMC

Susan Hawkins

Cheri and Bob Henderson

Heritage Land Bank

Hibbs-Hallmark & Co.

Tisa and Billy Hibbs

Hide-a-Way Community Church

Ladies Bible Study

Pat High

Tami and Bill Hobbs

Hoeffner Foundation

Hood Packaging Corp.

Hossley & Embry LLP

Ombra and Bill Hughes

Joy Hunt

Robin and Bruce Insalaco

Mary and Bob Irwin

Ali and Jason Isham

Russell W. Jackson

Bette King

Alison and Ken Kirby

Kiwanis Club of Hideaway Lake

Lori and Josh Knight

Jan and Jim Knowles

Carol and Jack Langston

Allen Locklin

Shellie and Charlie Lohman

Larry Lott Interiors

Anonymous

Mase Landscape Co.

Cynthia and Jim McAndrew

Anonymous

Elizabeth and Michael McNally

Belinda Meeks

Greta Moore-Dixon

Patrick and Jane Moran

Maurine Muntz

Ellen and John Musselman

Linda and Tony Myers

Anonymous

Martha and Arnold Oates

Marc Oates

Dr. Laura O'Halloran

Bonnie Palmer

Lana and Joe Peacock

Ellen and Roger Peirce

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

Judy and Bill Putnam

Ramey & Flock, PC

Anonymous

Nicole and Jason Richards

Amanda Richardson

Dr. Gene and Mary Richardson

The Rogers Foundation

Linda Rudd

John Schell, DVM, PC

Elizabeth and Paul Sharkey

Katherine Sharkey

Gillian and James Sheridan

Skillern's Business Systems

Betty Ann and Don Smith

Suzy and Roy Smith

Southside Bank

Judy and Tom Sparrow



Brent J. Spinks, Attorney at Law
Stanger Surveying Tyler LLC
Stephens & Stephens Orthodontics
Susan and Mickey Surles
Target Corp.

T.B. Butler Foundation

Texas Bank & Trust

Suzie and Glenn Thames

Threlkeld & Company Insurance

Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals &
Clinics

Anonymous

Tyler Hematology Oncology, P.A.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Agnes and Frank Ward

Terry's Car Repair

Phyllis and Terry Weiss

Wharton Law Firm

Wingstop

Wolf Benevolent Trust

Carrie and Sam Wolf

Women's Fund

James C. Wynne, Jr.

Mr. Sheng and Dr. Pochin Yin

John Yoder

Laura and Michael Young



Honoring . . .

**Allison and Julia Conflitti for their
birthdays** by the following

families—

McCormick, Cinti, Brunette,
Parks, Leblanc, Hiles, Creath,
Gregory, Gardiner, Satterfield,
Potter, Howard, Lisso, Raggio,
Dziedzic

Carson Richards for his birthday

Remembering . . .

Flay Stallings by

Elizabeth and Paul Sharkey

Billie Teter Lewis by

Anita Ray

Bruce Brookshire and Kasen Lee
by

William, Cathy, Caroline,
Catherine and Clark Hardy

Designating for . . .

The Rainbow Room by

Kiwanis Club of Hideaway Lake
Hubbard MYP Parent Organization
Rosewood Estates
Greater Texas Community Partners
Tyler Oilmen's Benefit Association



**LARRY LOTT
INTERIORS**
Presents the

Holiday
Home Tour

*Benefiting the
Children's Advocacy Center*

**Sunday, December 5, 2010
4:00PM – 8:00PM**



Interior photo of tour home courtesy of Larry Lott Interiors

You are invited to slow down and take in the beauty of the Holiday Season by touring the inside of 6 beautifully decorated Lake Tyler homes.

Tour the inside of the homes at your leisure via complimentary shuttle service departing every 20 minutes from Brookshire's in Whitehouse. There will be holiday hors d'oeuvres provided in each home.

\$50 ticket per person allows entry to all 6 homes. Tickets may be purchased beginning November 8th at Larry Lott Interiors, Belladonna Day Spa, Crutcher & Hartley/REMAX Properties, Brookshire's in Whitehouse, or at www.cacsmithcounty.org. You may also call the Children's Advocacy Center at (903)533-1880 for more information.



Exterior photos of homes courtesy of Crutcher & Hartley

The Children's Advocacy Center would like to thank the Holiday Home Tour Sponsors

**LARRY LOTT
INTERIORS**
Fine Furnishings/Gifts/Accessories/Design
www.larrylottinteriors.com

Crutcher & Hartley

Mike Brattler Homes

RE/MAX
PROPERTIES

XTO
ENERGY

HealthFirst
TPA

Linda Rudd & Steve Hellmuth

Bank of Tyler
A DIVISION OF HUNTINGTON STATE BANK MEMBER FDIC

BELLADONNA
Day Spa



NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 275
TYLER TX

Children's Advocacy Center
of Smith County
2210 Frankston Hwy
Tyler, Texas 75701
(903) 533-1880 phone
(903) 533-8862 fax
www.cacsmithcounty.org
info@cacsmithcounty.org

Handprints

2010 Board of Directors

Steve Manley
President
Elizabeth Sharkey
Vice president
Susan Surles
Secretary
Mike Thomas
Treasurer
Todd Anderson
Amy Bailey
Matt Bingham
Donna Bundy
Tammy Conflitti
Linda Cunningham
Mia Forehand
Debby Gunter
Amy McCullough
Greta Moore-Dixon
Angela Moss
Mark Oates
Eric Radde
Rebecca Risinger, M.D.
Leo Rossler
Mary Shelmire
Gillian Sheridan
Jenny Sloan
J.B. Smith
Kimber Spinks
Gary Swindle
Dorothy Taylor

Investigative Team

Michelle Brock
Tyler Police Department
Rodney Harrington
Tyler Police Department
Gerald Atchison
Smith County Sheriff's Office
Keven Fite
Smith County Sheriff's Office
Drew Allen
Child Protective Services
Danny Brown
Child Protective Services
Ben Bryan
Child Protective Services
Tonda Curry
Smith County D.A.'s Office
April Sikes
Smith County D.A.'s Office
Angela Cabaniss-RN,CA/CP,SANE
East Texas Medical Center
Kathleen Young-RN,CA/CP,SANE
East Texas Medical Center
Sue Hinson-RN,CA/CP,SANE,CFN
Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals and Clinics
Investigators as assigned
*Child Protective Services, Arp,
Bullard, Lindale, Overton, Troup, and
Whitehouse Police Depts.*

Staff

Carol Langston
Executive Director
Red Miller
Financial Administrator
Jennifer Yoder
Development Coordinator
Vicki Colston
Forensic Interviewer/Rainbow Room Coord.
Mandy Countryman
Community Educator
Beck Cunio
Kids in Court Coord./Forensic Interviewer
Jason Isham, M.S., LMFT
Protective Caregiver Therapist
Margaret McBride
Family Advocate/Volunteer Coord.
Edith Wineland
Victims Assistance Coordinator-Bilingual
Aurora Valdovinos, M.S., LMFT
Child Therapist

Partner Agencies

Arp Police Department
Bullard Police Department
Child Protective Services
East Texas Medical Center
Regional Healthcare System
Lindale Police Department
Overton Police Department
Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals and Clinics
Troup Police Department
Tyler Police Department
Smith County Criminal
District Attorney's Office
Smith County Sheriff's Office
Whitehouse Police Department

Handprints is published by the
Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County
2210 Frankston Hwy
Tyler, Texas 75701 (903) 533-1880
The Children's Advocacy Center of Smith
County is a not-for-profit (501)(c) (3)
organization and welcomes contributions



The Children's Advocacy Center of
Smith County is dedicated to child
victims of physical and sexual abuse
and strives to reduce trauma
through a unified effort that
facilitates thorough
investigations, effective
prosecutions and the healing
of the children and their families.

www.CaCSmithCounty.org

