



Community Leaders Spotlight Child Abuse and Neglect

Hamilton County Draws Attention to more than 5,000 Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect

Cincinnati, Ohio (March 31, 2010) More than 5,000 colorful pinwheels will be planted at Burnet Woods Park at noon Saturday, April 2, in a dramatic attempt to draw attention to the horrific problem of child abuse in this community.

“Pinwheels for Prevention” is an annual statewide campaign organized to promote awareness and prevention of child abuse by planting a colorful pinwheel for each report of abuse received by the county in the previous year. Many citizens are unaware of how widespread child abuse is in their local communities. In Hamilton County, 5,058 reports of abuse and neglect were made to the 241-KIDS child abuse reporting hotline in 2010.

Nationally, statistics are just as disturbing:

- 3.3 million reports, involving 6 million children, were made to child protection agencies across the United States.
- 1.5 million of those referrals were determined to be valid abuse and neglect reports.
- More than 1,700 children died from abuse or neglect.

“The beautiful, colorful pinwheels glistening in the spring sun represent a stark contrast to the darkness of child abuse,” said Moira Weir, director of Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services, which operates the child abuse reporting hotline and investigates reports of abuse. “For the more than 15,000 children involved with our agency last year, the innocence of childhood was shattered by abuse. A caring community will not tolerate the abuse of its children. Hopefully, we will plant many fewer pinwheels next year.”

Hamilton County joins all 88 Ohio counties participating in Pinwheels for Prevention as a kick off to Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. This year’s local Pinwheels event is sponsored by Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services, Hamilton County’s Family and Children First Council and the Council on Child Abuse of Southern Ohio, Inc.

Patricia Eber, executive director of the county's Family and Children First Council, said her agency reviews every child fatality in the county. In 2010, five Hamilton County children were the victims of abuse homicides.

"There will be more than 5,000 pinwheels planted at the park, but I will particularly think of those five children who lost their lives to abuse," she said. "These tragedies are unacceptable. We need to stand firm as a community and provide a voice to the voiceless."

Heidi Malott, clinical coordinator at The Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, a first-of-its-kind, nationally recognized therapeutic center for victims of child abuse that just celebrated its 10th anniversary, said her heart breaks at some of what she sees on a daily basis.

"You can't look into the faces of these children and feel anything but compassion," she said. "I know this is a compassionate community. I ask that everyone do something to stop child abuse. Mentor a parent. Take a neighborhood child under your wing. Advocate with a politician. This problem is too big to sit still."

Karen McCann, senior program director of the Council on Child Abuse of Southern Ohio, Inc., said every member of the community should play a role in child abuse prevention.

"Plug the 241-KIDS number into your speed dial," she said. "If you suspect abuse, don't hesitate to call the experts. It is better to check it out and be wrong than to do nothing and a child dies. Also, parents can always call the Parent Helpline at 961-8004 just to talk and get encouragement and support."

Here are the details for the event:

What: Pinwheels for Prevention

When: noon, April 2 (pictures of planting and interviews with experts)

Where: Burnet Woods Park, corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Clifton Avenue, across from the University of Cincinnati.

Why: To promote the awareness and prevention of child abuse and neglect

For more information, call:

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