

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

~Frederick Douglass

Child abuse is nothing new. One only has to look in the bible to read horrific stories of atrocities perpetuated against children thousands of years ago. It wasn't until 1875, nine years after the formation of the ASPCA to protect animals, that the first child protection agency was established. Since then, child welfare organizations have focused primarily on providing treatment *after* abuse has already occurred. With the limited success of this approach, perhaps it's time to try new tactics that focus on preventing abuse *before* it starts.

Just as routine maintenance on a car helps keep it running smoothly and is more cost effective than replacing a neglected engine, social service programs that strengthen families can reduce incidences of abuse and the need for intervention. Devoting resources to building safe, stable, nurturing relationships is the best way to help children reach their full potential. The challenge is identifying which families are at risk of having engine problems.

Utilizing research from various ACE studies may be the best place to start. These studies have confirmed a direct correlation between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – stressors including physical or sexual abuse, family violence, parental drug or alcohol addiction, and household member incarceration – and chronic physical, mental, and behavioral problems that can affect children for their lifetime. A recent study with more than 64,000 incarcerated youth concluded that children who grow up with a higher prevalence of ACEs are also significantly more likely

to be involved repeatedly with the criminal justice system.

In response to these studies, Washington became the first state to recognize ACEs as a “powerful common determinant of a child's ability to be successful at school and, as an adult, to be successful at work, to avoid behavioral and chronic physical health conditions, and to build healthy relationships.” In June 2011 Washington state legislators passed an ACE-reduction law to address the relationship between ACE scores, health-related problems, and criminal involvement.

ACE-reduction programs that increase parental protective factors and enhance a child's confidence, self-control, and responsibility not only benefit the child but also our communities by reducing future medical, social service, and criminal justice costs. We must educate parents, teachers, healthcare personnel, and child welfare workers about ACEs and their devastating effects on children's brain development. Pediatricians and school counselors should be trained to routinely screen for ACEs and recommend therapy and referral services when ACEs are first identified. Mandatory childcare and development courses at the high school level would teach tomorrow's parents how to reduce stressors and raise healthy children.

Child abuse may not be new, but the way we assess and treat child maltreatment must continually evolve if we want happier, healthier children. The future of our communities depends on it.



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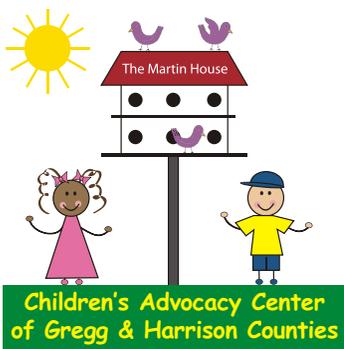


**The Enemy of Every
Child is Silence**

PREVENT • PROTECT • REPORT

800-252-5400

There's No Excuse for Child Abuse!



Martin House message

A newsletter of The Martin House Children's Advocacy Center
of Gregg & Harrison Counties

A non-profit 501(c)3 organization Summer 2014 www.themartinhousecac.org

The mission of The Martin House Children's Advocacy Center is to ensure that every child who is suffering from abuse and comes to our center has an opportunity to be heard, feel protected, and receive services that are vital to his or her continued safety and future wellbeing.

A Safe, Silly Summer

by Roxanne Stevenson, Executive Director

Having our office located next to the Boys & Girls Club in Longview means that at some point, almost everyday throughout the summer, we hear the lively chatter and enthusiastic delight of dozens of kids as they play outside. The happy sounds of children laughing and having fun is such a joyous noise. A child's innocent spirit and curious nature is a wonderful reminder that there are always new friends to meet, things to learn, and places to explore regardless of our age.

Unfortunately, a child's inquisitiveness can also lead to harm especially during the summer months. Accidents, poisonings, drowning, and heat-related illnesses or death are all too common and most often preventable. You can ensure your children have a safe, silly summer by remembering these tips:

- Never leave children unattended around lakes, ponds, pools, or bathtubs. It only takes a short time, small amount of water, and a distracted caregiver for a child to drown. Most drowning victims do not yell for help so keep children in sight at all times even if they're wearing flotation devices or know how to swim.
- Children are dying in greater numbers each summer from being accidentally forgotten in cars. Never leave a child alone in a car even with the engine and air conditioning running. So that children aren't forgotten, place a personal item such as a purse or cell phone next to the child's car seat. Keep car doors locked while at home to prevent children from climbing inside to play or hide.
- Keep a first aid kit at home and in the car. Enter emergency and poison control numbers into your cell phone for quick access. Learn CPR.
- Sending a child to camp? Reduce the chances of abuse by confirming background checks are conducted on all staff and volunteers, and ensuring policies are in place that prohibit situations where an adult can be alone with your child.
- Know who your kids are spending time with in-person, online, and on the cell phone. Cyber crimes against children have increased dramatically through the use of social media sites.
- If you suspect a child is being hurt, call the Texas abuse hotline at 800-252-5400.



Bags, Boots & Bingo Winners

Our first fundraiser in Marshall on May 3rd was a great success and a lot of fun. Special thanks to our VIP models (shown above), State Representative Chris Paddie who spoke at the event, and our generous sponsors and donors who helped us raise more than \$7,000. Congratulations to the ladies below who won fabulous designer handbags and boots while playing bingo and helping a good cause.



Did you know...

Since September 2013, more than 50 child abuse cases have been filed by the Gregg County District Attorney's office. Thirty-three cases have resulted in guilty dispositions so far.

The Martin House has a new website! Check out our fresh new look, view our "No Excuse for Child Abuse" commercial, and find useful information. Thanks to the team at Key Creative for redesigning our site, www.TheMartinHouseCAC.org. Take a look and let us know what you think.

Our services are free so donations are vital to the children we help. Last year we conducted 474 forensic interviews and our contract counselors provided over 740 hours of therapy to more than 200 children and caregivers. Help a child overcome abuse with a donation of any amount or sponsor a child's advocacy and counseling sessions for just \$495.