



**Child Protect of
Mercer County, Inc.**
Child Advocacy Center

2017 Quarterly Newsletter

Battling Abuse, Restoring Lives.

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

It is time once again to celebrate the good things our community does to promote healthy child development. This is also a time to reflect on the work that still remains to help protect children.



When a community comes together to protect children, as it has in Mercer County, we all benefit. Our fellow citizens are better educated and we see a profound and positive impact on the quality of life for families in our community. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call 1-800-352-6513 and for emergencies

dial 911. Let's come together to help shine light on the problem of child abuse in our community and work together to make a difference for our kids.

A MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

WRITTEN BY: TWYLA HERSMAN, MA, LPC

"In the criminal justice system, sexually-based offenses are considered particularly heinous..." Truer words were never spoken than these that open the long-running TV series, "Law and Order: SVU." Unfortunately, the crimes portrayed in this series occur all too often in real life. More tragic still is the fact that many victims of sexual offenses are children. Nationally, one of every four girls and one of every six boys is sexually abused in some fashion before their eighteenth birthday. In 2014, over 58,000 children were know to have been sexually abused. What we don't know, of course, are the actual numbers, as many cases go unreported. What makes sexual crimes so reprehensible, so awful that until recent years, they were rarely acknowledged, and when they were acknowledged, were spoken of only in whispers?

Unlike other types of trauma, sexual abuse is a violation of the victim's personhood. It devalues, demeans, and denies the victim's right to decide for self. In other words: "What you (victim) want means nothing. What I (perpetrator) wants means everything." The victim is treated as property rather than as a human being.

continued inside...

Your Donation Dollars at Work !!!

January 1st—March 31st, 2017:

- 89** Forensic Interviews Conducted
- 20** Medical Exam Coordinated
- 61** Children Referred for Therapy
- 17** Cases Resulting in Charges
- 39** Children Received Free Counseling at Child Protect
- 346** Children Received Advocacy and Support Services at Child Protect
- 959** Students Received Child Abuse Prevention Programming

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www.facebook.com/mercerchildprotect

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Our Mission:

The mission of Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc. is to administer a child-centered facility for child abuse victims and to coordinate investigative, treatment and educational services to them and their families, while also working with the community to prevent abuse.

Founded in 2001, Child Protect is a nationally accredited 501(c)3 non-profit organization that is funded through donations, fundraisers, and grants.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT: TAMMY NEAL

Reaching out to the community to provide support, education, and awareness for families is Tammy Neal's passion. Tammy joined Child Protect ten years ago as an Ameri-

Corps VISTA volunteer. In 2009 she transitioned into our Outreach Coordinator position and was promoted in 2015 to Operations Manager. Tammy graduated in 1998 with an Associates Degree in Accounting and is currently working on her Bachelor's Degree in sociology. Tammy has obtained # hours of child development and forensic interviewing training over her career at Child Protect. Outside of work, Tammy is a mother to three girls, a Maw Maw to her grandson, and happily married to her husband of 17 years.

Tammy has overseen the Body Safety child abuse prevention program for Mercer County elementary schools for the past decade. This school year alone she has presented the program to over 2,500 elementary students. Tammy also oversees the Mercer County Starting Points Family Resource Center, a program of Child Protect, that provides resources to any family in Mercer County. These resources include non-perishable food, basic hygiene/needs items, clothing, and cleaning supplies. We are always in need of basic needs products like soap, tooth brushes, tooth paste, shampoo, cleaning supplies, and non-perishable food. To make a donation, contact Tammy at (304) 425-2710.

2ND ANNUAL CHEFS BATTLE CHILD ABUSE

Child Protect hosted our 2nd Annual Chefs Battle Child Abuse fundraiser on Friday, April 7th at the Chuck Mathena Center. The event, which featured meals from three area chefs, proved very successful for our agency and our event partner, HYPE Ministries. At the end of the night, Chef Ryan Tayloe from Pipestem Resort State Park was the crowd's choice for Top Chef. Ryan's spinach artichoke parmesan chicken, along with his signature deep fried deviled egg, won over the voters. In addition to the winning plate, attendees feasted on sriracha bourbon glazed shrimp from 2016 Top Chef Clint Neel and peppered steak diane from new competitor Bethany Adams, Head Chef at the Cherry Street Café. Our sincerest thanks to the chefs and our event sponsors, Green Valley Animal Hospital and Grants Supermarket as well as our table sponsors and event volunteers.



A MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CONTINUED...

Sexual abuse crosses all boundaries— physical, emotional, sexual: sometimes, even familial. The physical violation often destroys, or, at least, threatens the victim’s sense of safety and security. In some instances, the ability to feel safe is never restored.

Additionally, body anxiety often occurs following sexual abuse. Child victims may fear that their bodies have been irreparably damaged, that they are pregnant, or that their sexual orientation has been decided or altered by the abuse.

Sexual abuse invades the psyche as surely as it invades the body. Because the sexual offender is most often someone known and trusted by the child victim (with 34% percent of child sexual abusers being a family member), the comfort of trusting adults is destroyed or severely damaged by an act of molestation. This inability to trust may be short lived, or it may last a lifetime wreaking havoc in future relationships.

Many child victims suffer lasting insults to self-esteem. Therapists who work to facilitate healing with children who have been sexually abused hear their questions echo, “Am I worthless?” Why did this happen to me?” “Was this my fault?” Understandably, child victims often struggle with pervasive confusion as they try to make meaning of what they have endured. The youngest victims have little, if any, awareness of sexuality, and yet they have been forced to participate in activities outside their frame of reference. Simply put, they are pushed into awareness beyond their developmental level.

When the abuser is a family member or other person sharing the child’s household, an element of captivity may also come into play. If the child is of very tender years, he or she may not even have words to disclose what is happening in an environment which, by rights, should be safe. If a disclosure is made, the child may not be believed, and, therefore, no protection from future abuse will be put into place. In such scenarios, it is not surprising that over time the child victim develops a pervasive sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

One child victim of a heinous crime of sexual abuse is too many. Thousands; simply unacceptable. We owe it to our children to focus our dollars and our efforts on prevention, education, and treatment. All three levels of intervention are as vital as air, food, and water.

100% of caregivers surveyed from January—March 2017 felt that if they knew someone else who was dealing with a situation like they faced, they would tell that person about Child Protect.

STAFF ROSTER

Twyla Hersman,
Therapist

Michael King,
Program Services Specialist

LaDeana Morgan,
Direct Services Manager

Tammy Neal,
Operations Manager

Sherry Phillips,
Family Advocate

Terri Williams,
Forensic Interviewer

Shiloh Woodard,
Executive Director



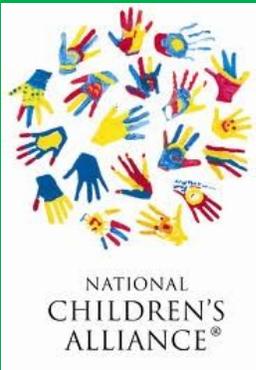
Child Protect staff at the 2017 Chefs Battle Child Abuse event.

MERCER COUNTY'S MULTIDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATIVE TEAM

Bluefield Police Department	Mercer County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Bluefield Regional Medical Center	Mercer County Sheriff's Department
Children's Home Society of WV– Princeton Office	Princeton Community Hospital
ChildLaw Services, Inc.	Princeton Police Department
Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc.	WV. Dept. of Health and Human Resources– Mercer County
Mercer County SANE Program	WV State Police– Princeton Detachment & Crimes Against Children Unit
Mercer County Board of Education	SAFE, Inc.
Mercer County Juvenile Probation Office	

*100% of caregivers surveyed January-March 2017
felt that their child felt safe at our center.*

Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc. is a nationally accredited, non-profit Child Advocacy Center (CAC) that has been helping Mercer County children suspected of being abused, neglected or victims of crime since 2001.



JANUARY– MARCH '17: DONORS & CONTRIBUTORS

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Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc.
Mercer County's Child Advocacy Center

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