

Serving Abused Children of St. Tammany and Washington Parishes

## Special Interest Articles

*Why a CAC?*

*Time, Talent & Treasure*

*Future Events*

*Staff News*



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

## Why Do We Need a CAC?

**Is it safe to tell?** Imagine the countless child victims of abuse who ask themselves this question each year.

In 1984, U.S. Rep. Bud Cramer established the first Children's Advocacy Center in Huntsville, Alabama and that number has since grown to over 600 CACs nationwide. Staffed by highly trained sexual abuse experts, the CAC provides a child with an environment in which **it is safe to tell.**

Before the creation of the CAC, children were first questioned by the adult to whom they first disclosed, then multiple times by the agencies assigned to investigate the case. This only served to compound the original trauma. Today, at the CAC, the child can safely disclose on videotape in a secure atmosphere and the

judges and attorneys can then view the tape without re-traumatizing the victim.

Children's Advocacy Centers not only give the child hope, but the families of the victim as well. Sexual abuse often decimates a family and leaves the caregivers lost in a sea of legal and emotional uncertainty. Research has shown that if the adult caregivers are given the necessary counseling resources and an explanation of the legal process immediately following their child's disclosure, it enables the family members to provide support and comfort that the child will desperately need to heal.

At Hope House over 275 children walk through our door each year. Statistics published in 2006 showed that on the average a non-CAC interview costs almost

\$4,000 and that greater value is placed on an interview by a CAC than on traditional investigations. Our CAC's average cost per child is only \$1100. The services provided by Hope House are all available because of donors, like you, who see the tremendous need in our community and understand the value of rebuilding an abused child's trust and sense of well-being.

As the Children's Advocacy Center/ Hope House continues to expand services to our community, we need your help more than ever. It is vitally important that we all work together so that no child will ever feel that it is not safe to tell.

*Debe Jones,  
Victim Advocate*

## Christian Golfers Help the CAC



The Christian Golfers' Association once again hosted its Charity Golf Tournament. Proceeds from the Tournament will be donated to the Children's Advocacy Center/Hope House.

The Ninth Annual CGA Charity Tournament was held on a perfect fall day, October 29<sup>th</sup> at Money Hill Golf and Country Club in Abita Springs. The day began with a light breakfast and coffee provided by Starbucks. Promptly at 9:00 a.m. play began with a shotgun start and ended with a barbecue "feast", an

annual favorite, prepared by Bob Burris and Gerald Gibson.

In addition to breakfast, lunch, and drinks, there were silent auction items to please the most discriminating golfers and several Hole-in-One contests, including the chance to win a boat from Nunmaker Yachts, two watches from Lowe's Jewelers, and a custom set of golf clubs from Nevada Bob's!

If you missed this year's event and would like to know about next year's tournament, call CGA Committee Chair Hal

Stricklin at 985-809-3023 to get on next year's mailing list. This is a great opportunity to play at one of our community's premier golf courses, as well as help the hundreds of abused children in our community.

Our thanks to the generous members of the Christian Golfers Association for choosing, once again, to partner with the CAC/Hope House in this very successful event!

*Dorothy Garcia  
Executive Director*



"This training emphasized the unique challenges children present when testifying in court, depending on their developmental level, understanding of courtroom semantics, and their level of trauma."

I wanted to take up a little newsletter space to let everyone know about two trainings I was able to attend recently.

In August, Ysonde Boland, from the District Attorney's Office, and I took advantage of a great training opportunity to attend ***Through a Child's Eyes*** in Arlington, VA. Not only did we learn about using closed circuit TV for children's testimony, but also how easy it is to get lost at the Lincoln Memorial after dark!

In September, I attended ***Advanced Forensic Interview Training*** at the National Children's Advocacy Center in Huntsville, AL. Between intense peer reviews, my lunch breaks included viewing some great old homes while walking the Historic District.

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice sponsored ***Through a Child's Eyes***. The Children's Advocacy Center LA offered this training (all expenses paid) to only a select few. This three-day training provided a better vision of how children experience the judicial system and how a child's courtroom experience can be improved, therefore

facilitating testimony that is more informative. This training emphasized the unique challenges children present when testifying in court, depending on their developmental level, understanding of courtroom semantics, and their level of trauma. Recognition of these concerns has resulted in states enacting legislation to authorize the use of closed-circuit and/or videotaped testimony of witnesses. Louisiana's legislation regarding closed-circuit testimony is based on whether a child could suffer serious emotional distress or could not reasonably communicate his testimony to the court. See State of Louisiana legislation regarding closed-circuit television testimony in Louisiana Children's Code article 329.

The ***Advanced Forensic Interview Training*** in Huntsville was specifically designed for experienced professionals who have responsibility for initial forensic interviews with children. This training, also with limited enrollment, happens only twice a year and is in great demand by forensic interviewers for all over the United States.

I was fortunate to receive a \$600 scholarship from the Southern Regional CAC to help with expenses. This training brought together the knowledge, ideas, and suggestions of many professionals from all over the country. Internationally renowned trainers facilitated discussions regarding new research, cultural factors, technique options, interviewing preschool children, predictors of delayed disclosures and recantations, and a comparison of different interviewing protocols.

The National Children's Advocacy Center complex is comprised of several very impressive buildings. Along with its training facility (which includes a mock courtroom), the NCAC complex also houses law enforcement officers, child protection workers, physicians, counselors, as well as forensic interviewers. What a fabulous facility to work in and beautiful city to visit.

JoBeth Rickels,  
Forensic Interviewer



The counseling center is once again expanding! Through our collaboration with Metropolitan Center for Women and Children, we now have an additional counselor seeing our children and families. Lori Forte, M.Ed., joins us on Fridays. Lori is the Children's Coordinator at the Metro Eastbank office. She works with both the residential and non-residential domestic violence/sexual assault survivors on the southshore and now will be conducting both individual and group counseling for St. Tammany families. The staff and our families are both very grateful to have her "on board".

Additionally, after the first of the year, it is with high hopes that the CAC can acquire nearby property to designate for a counseling/training center. This vision for expansion is crucial in serving the needs of St. Tammany and Washington Parishes. Services are desperately needed for the kids and families of Slidell/Lacombe and Franklinton/Bogalusa. I hope we can locate appropriate space to bring groups and individual counseling to these underserved areas. This endeavor will require planning and contributions for the entire community. Please contact our offices if this is something you might be interested in.

*Beverley Connor,  
MSW, LCSW  
Therapist*

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## and a Heartfelt Thanks to our Donors:



2007 CAC Christmas Ornament

### Tip for Giving:

*Every evening, empty your pocket change into a jar. When the jar gets full, give the money to a favorite charity. You'll declutter your nightstand and purse while keeping in touch with the things you value.*





Covington Kiwanis Club members putting up their sign after outfitting our backyard with furniture for our counseling families.

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our fifth annual Mad Hatter Tea, an event better attended and with more activities than ever. A special thank you to our 240+ guests who enjoyed high tea provided by Patton's and to our many generous sponsors who made this day possible. This year we funded nearly three months of our operating expenses from this extraordinary event!

The Mandeville Republican Women hosted a luncheon and fashion show on

September 19<sup>th</sup> at Beau Chene Country Club, generously donating its profits to the CAC. The show was very successful, with food, models, and fashions top notch!

This spring and fall, the CAC was invited to participate in the PIGasso and PIG Invitational Golf Tournament, wonderful events hosted by a very caring and generous group who have shared their treasure with many non-profit organizations.



Lisa Lewis takes a short pause as she redesigns our reception window.

Lisa Lewis returned to the CAC through an outreach mission from Faith Bible Church in Slidell. The gift of her artistic talent has rendered beautiful changes in our waiting room and in two of our offices. The paint was a donation from her church and the time and talent is her gift to us. View the picture of her aside her finished work in the family waiting room.

In early October, we received a bountiful supply of handcrafted quilts, personally made by the Piecemakers, a quilting group comprised of Northshore women. We interview and counsel many children for whom a soft quilt is just the soothing antidote they need as they tell what occurred. We are ever so grateful to these ladies for their generosity, workmanship, and for keeping our children in their thoughts.



## Future Events:

### November 2007

**Christmas Ornaments** will again be on sale, individually crafted by Joyce O'Brien and her daughter, Terri Boswell. This year they feature a snowman encased in a clear Christmas ball, tied with a bright red bow. See picture of ornament on other side of this page.

Our **Christmas Raffle** will begin in mid-November. Call the office or see a Board Member to purchase your chance(s) to win one of several autographed sports balls, dinner out, or a basket of gift certificates.

### December 6, 2007

The **Northlake Republic Women** will again host its **Teddy Bear Tea** at the home of Shawn Reed. Watch for your invitation in the mail in mid-November.

The CAC is one of three non-profits the **Northshore Mall** has selected to

receive a generous donation based on shoppers' votes. Please shop at the Northshore Mall, take a moment during your busy Christmas shopping to vote for the CAC, and help us win the grand prize of \$10,000!

**May 10, 2008 – Mad Hatter Tea**

## Abuse Prevention Training....

For some time, we at the CAC have wanted to be pro-active in the prevention of child abuse. A national organization, *Darkness to Light*, recently implemented a program to teach adults, through a video presentation and workbook, simple, pro-active steps to help protect children from sexual abuse.

In July, Bethany Case attended the "Stewards of Children" training in

Charleston, S.C. This course certified her as a facilitator in the program, allowing her to conduct trainings. In August, Bethany practiced her training skills on the CAC staff. As of today, Bethany is the only CAC employee in Louisiana to be a *Darkness to Light* facilitator trainer. Our plan is to offer this training to other CAC's in the mid-South as well as adults throughout St. Tammany and Washington Parishes.

The training is 2-1/2 to 3 hours in length and can be conducted with any group of adults. If this is something you and/or a group you belong to might be interested in, please give Bethany a call at 892-3885, extension 6.

*"...a program to teach adults...simple, proactive steps to help protect children from sexual abuse."*

## And Working with Families

Since the inception of the Victim Advocate program at the CAC, we have had greater success in understanding our clients' needs and the needs of their caregivers.

By initiating a "crisis interview" with the caregivers, while the child is with the forensic interviewer, I am able to ascertain what counseling, if any, has been provided and how best to meet the child's immediate needs in that area. Occasionally, caregivers just need someone to listen and help them understand that they are not alone during this traumatic time.

A folder with various counseling and resource material (funded through the *Jr. League of Greater Covington*) is provided to each caregiver during the "crisis interview" with an explanation of available services. Follow up phone calls within a two to three week period ensure that the child's needs are being met and that the family is transitioned to the Victims Assistance Coordinator at the District Attorney's office. This ensures that the families stay informed at every stage of the legal process.

This new approach has helped us to identify a serious lack of available

mental health care services in both Washington and St. Tammany Parishes and has prompted the CAC to discuss how we can help and what it would entail as regards personnel and necessary funding.

My training for the Victim Advocate program was attained through the National Children's Advocacy Center's online training. Additional assistance from my colleagues at the CAC has been invaluable.

*Debe Jones  
Victim Advocate*

*"...we have had greater success in understanding our clients' needs and the needs of their caregivers."*

**Children's Advocacy Center**  
**P.O. Box 1852**  
**Covington, LA 70434**

**Phone**  
 (985) 892-3885  
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 (985) 892-3875

**Justice, Hope, and Healing**

A fully accredited member of the National Children's Alliance



## Serving the Community...

Our caseload numbers have increased:

As of mid-October this year, 220 children have come to Hope House for interviews. A total of 225 children interviewed in 2006.

Our therapists are counseling 45 – 50 children and adults each week, either individually or in group therapy. As children and families are able to leave our counseling, there are always more waiting to enter.

The staff and board of the CAC are committed to being here for the children and their caregivers in St. Tammany and Washington Parishes, as we are needed. We need the support of the entire community, from municipalities, law enforcement offices, businesses and caring individuals to keep our doors open.

## Our Staff

### CAC Staff Members

Dorothy Garcia,  
 Executive Director  
 JoBeth Rickels and  
 Bethany Case,  
 Forensic Interviewers  
 Liz Taurman, Resource  
 Development  
 Debe Jones: Office Mrg.,  
 Victim Advocate

### CAC Support Staff

Therapists:  
 Beverley Connor, MSW,  
 LCSW  
 Lisa Erichson, MSW, LCSW  
 Play Therapist:  
 Dr. Barbara Hebert, Ph.D.



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