

Child Advocacy Center celebrates Child Abuse Prevention Month

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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EAST ALTON - 650 brave children were interviewed at the Madison County Child Advocacy Center in 2015. Each of these children had their life disrupted by an allegation of severe physical or sexual abuse.

To raise awareness for child abuse prevention, the Madison County Child Advocacy Center is holding its 5th Annual Kids Health, Safety and Activity Fair on Saturday April 23, 2016 at Julia's Banquet Center from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. The Kids Fair is presented by the Madison County Mental Health Board and Riverbend Family Ministries.

"This is truly a day just for kids! The Center will be giving out free bike helmets while supplies last. There will be various vendors from the community, plenty of activities, and some special entertainment. All children deserve a happy and healthy childhood," said Executive Director, Carrie Cohan.

Previously held at the Alton Square Mall, this event will have a new location this year- Julia's Banquet Center in East Alton. The Kids Fair features several great activities for children as well as a balloon artist from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

As mentioned above, bike helmets will be given to children while supplies last, and there are some great acts lined up for the stage. The Kids Business Expo will also be featured at the Fair. The Kids Business Expo is a great time for child entrepreneurs to show off their skills.

April is child abuse prevention month. During this month, the Center and many other organizations in the area focus on raising awareness of child abuse in Madison County. It is estimated that one in every 22 children is involved in an abuse allegation. That's more than one child per classroom.

The Center has a very specific role to play in the child abuse investigation process. The CAC is a resource for children who are brave enough to disclose abuse. Through a recorded forensic interview, children are able to share their story one time, in a safe and supportive environment.

The Center works with a team (composed of Law Enforcement, DCFS, Medical and Mental Health Professionals, and the Madison County States Attorney's Office) that is dedicated to helping children and their families find hope and healing despite an abuse allegation.

There is no cost to attend the Kids Fair. For more information on the Kids Fair or being a part of the Kids Business Expo, please contact Claire Cooper at 618-296-5398 or via email at cccooper@co.madison.il.us.