

# **Celebrating hope in action with the Madison County Child Advocacy Center**

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EDWARDSVILLE - 650 Interviews. 650 Reasons. In 2015, the Madison County Child Advocacy Center interviewed 650 children involved in an allegation of abuse.

The Madison County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) coordinates a multidisciplinary team that consists of professionals from the Child Advocacy Center, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, local law enforcement, the Madison County State's Attorney's Office, and professionals from the medical and mental health fields to provide professional intervention and support services to fight child abuse. An estimated 3,500 children in Madison County are alleged to have been abused, every year. While this is a staggering statistic, there is hope. The Center 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 has experienced a 28% increase in the number of interviews conducted since 2014, and it only seems to be rising. "In 2016, we've experienced 5 record months in the number of interviews conducted of children involved in abuse allegations," said Carrie Cohan, Executive Director of the Center.

The CAC holds events throughout the year to help the community learn more about the services the Center offers, as well as to raise funds for the organization. Friday October 21<sup>st</sup> is the Center's Harvest of Hope benefit event at the Leclaire Room on the Lewis and Clark N.O. Nelson Campus in Edwardsville. This event focuses on raising money to provide hope and healing to children and their families in our community.

"Harvest of Hope is a dinner/auction style event that features several ways that patrons can support the Center. It is a time for us to reflect on the work that the Center has done the past year, celebrate those who have supported us, and raise funds for the coming year so that we're able to continue serving children," Cohan said.

While the main focus of Harvest of Hope is to raise funds for the organization, it also honors a group or individual(s) with the Harvest of Hope Award. The Harvest of Hope Award is given to recipients that embody the mission of the Center and are an example of hope in action in our community. With their outstanding community involvement, and involvement with the Center, the choice to honor Barry and Gaye Julian with the 2016 Harvest of Hope Award, was an easy one. "The Julian's are incredibly invested in our community and choose to give back in many ways to make it a better place to live and thrive for everyone. They have been supportive of all of the Center's initiatives. From providing snacks for children who are here for an interview to supporting our many fundraising and community awareness events, their generosity is astounding."

There are still opportunities available for sponsorship of Harvest of Hope. “Sponsoring this event means you are a champion for abused children in our community.” said Claire Cooper, CAC Development Specialist. “We have some wonderful agencies involved in the event already, such as Widman Construction, INC. of Godfrey, and the Simmons Employee Foundation. No child or family is ever charged a fee for coming to the Center, and to make sure that we are able to provide services for the record number of children interviewed, we’re reaching out to our community for support.”

For more information on the Center or the upcoming Harvest of Hope Event, please call 618-296-5398 or email Claire Cooper at [cccoper@co.madison.il.us](mailto:cccoper@co.madison.il.us). Tickets to Harvest of Hope are still available and may be purchased online at [www.madco-cac.org](http://www.madco-cac.org) for \$65.00 each.