



# Video Included: Child Abuse Prevention Month Kicks Off In Madison County

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Representatives from the Madison County Child Advocacy Center and other local organizations and offices joined together in the Madison County Administration Building to kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month on March 31.

Maureen Schuette, an associate judge in the Family Division for Madison County, said April has been observed as Child Abuse Prevention Month every year since 1983.

“Since that time, billions of Americans have participated in this national campaign,” Schuette said. “Individuals, organizations, and committees across the United States plant pinwheels, they also tie ribbons, organize trainings, and host fundraisers and other activities to celebrate healthy, happy childhoods.”

She added that they raise awareness that “all children deserve to grow up in nurturing and safe homes,” and recognized some of the people at the event, including:

- Chief Circuit Judge Stephen Stobbs
- Circuit Judge Amy Sholar, who also runs the Madison County Family Division
- Associate Judge Andy Carruthers
- Associate Judge Veronica Armouti
- Associate Judge Emily Nielsen
- Madison County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler
- Circuit Clerk Tom McRae
- Sheriff Jeff Connor
- Coroner Steve Nonn
- Child Advocacy Center Executive Director Carrie Cohan
- Children First Foundation Executive Director Julie Chambers

Prenzler then read the official proclamation recognizing April as Child Abuse Awareness Month in Madison County and said he “urge all citizens to work together to help reduce child abuse and neglect.”

Tarra Winters, director of programs with Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, was the first guest speaker to take the podium. She said this Friday, April 7 is “Wear Blue Day” to raise awareness and she encourages the public to wear blue and share pictures with the organization on their Facebook, Instagram or Twitter pages with the hashtag #GreatChildhoods and/or #GoBlueIllinois. Pictures can also be emailed to [lcaspar@pcaillinois.org](mailto:lcaspar@pcaillinois.org).

“Child abuse and neglect is one of the greatest tragedies of our time with far-reaching consequences for the youngest and most vulnerable members of society,” Winters said. “We need to raise awareness that child abuse - including child sexual abuse and neglect - happens in every community. It happens in our schools, in our places of worship, in youth groups, clubs and sports programs, and among our family and friends.”

Maria Miller, deputy director of child protection for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), commended the work of DCFS “champions” who aren’t always in the spotlight.

“Oftentimes when we hear about DCFS, it’s in a negative connotation, because a piece of a story is told that becomes sensationalized,” Miller said. “What people do not get a chance to see is the 3,000 champions - also known as employees - who work tirelessly and unwavering in their commitment to provide the best possible service, care and resource they can to the 153,356 child victims investigated during the last fiscal year alone.

“At our core, DCFS is an agency made up of people who put their heart and soul into the work, because we are tasked with the most important job in the world: ensuring the health and safety of the children that are brought to our attention. We take the job very seriously.”

A full video from the event, including speeches from more guest speakers, is available at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).