



# Wood River Event Highlights Strong Families, Safe Children in April

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March 28 2024 11:18 AM

WOOD RIVER - April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and it was announced today that at 10 a.m. on April 5, 2024, there will be a prevention in partnership kick-off at Riverbend Family Ministries at 144 E. Ferguson in Wood River.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Third Judicial Circuit Family Violence Prevention Council will partner with other organizations in the month's focus to prevent child abuse.



Guest speakers for the April 5 event include Judge Maureen Schuette; Erin Bickle, Executive Director, Refuge; Tarra Winters, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; Stephanie Grigsby, Southern Regional Administrator - Child Protection, Illinois

Department of Children and Family Services; Chief Judge Stephen Stobbs; and Senator Erica Harriss. The event will include a proclamation reading and information regarding the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

“Child abuse and neglect prevention happens in partnership. We all have a role to play in creating positive experiences for children and connecting families with resources when they need them. Children and families are the foundation of our communities and when they are safe, strong, and supported, it benefits all of us,” said Tarra Winters, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois.

Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since that time, millions of Americans have participated in this national campaign. Individuals, organizations and communities across the United States plant pinwheels, tie ribbons, organize training, host fundraisers, and support a

multitude of other activities celebrating healthy, happy childhoods and raising awareness that all children deserve to grow up in nurturing, safe homes.





“Illinois DCFS, our private agency partners, social service providers in the community – and every Illinoisan – have a shared responsibility to do everything we can to ensure children grow up in safe and loving homes,” said Illinois DCFS Director Heidi E. Mueller. “For DCFS that means responding quickly to protect children when we receive reports of abuse or neglect and partnering with families to support children safely at home whenever possible.

"In 2023, our child abuse and neglect hotline responded to more than 231,500 calls in 11 seconds or less, and we were able to support 4,089 families in preservation programs, allowing youth to remain safely at home. We ask all of you to please be a voice supporting strong families and safe kids in our communities."

Residents are encouraged to join the event on April 5 to show support for all children and their families. This event will be open to the general public.

The following organizations and individuals were instrumental in planning this event: Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Third Judicial Circuit Family Violence Prevention Council, Madison County Child Advocacy Center, Refuge, Riverbend Family Ministries, Oasis Women’s Center, and Children First Foundation. To learn more about child abuse prevention, visit [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org).