Tie on a Blue Ribbon to Show Support for Child Abuse Prevention Month

Governor Jennifer Granholm has declared April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Michigan, noting that more must be done to reduce child abuse. The Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) is the only statewide, non-profit organization in Michigan dedicated solely to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. “Child abuse is an all too common problem in Michigan – a child is reported as abused or neglected every four minutes,” Richard Bearup, director of the Children’s Trust Fund said. CTF provides funding to 71 local child abuse and neglect councils, representing 81 of Michigan’s 83 counties. Dollars donated to CTF are also used to provide funding for prevention programs in the donor’s own community. One way your community can show their support for Child Abuse Prevention Month is to join the Blue Ribbon Campaign.

The blue ribbon is the nationally recognized symbol for child abuse & neglect prevention. You may ask why blue? The Blue Ribbon campaign began in Virginia in 1989, when grandmother, Bonnie W. Finney, tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her van “to make people wonder.” The story she told to inquisitive community members was a tragic story about the abuse of her grandchildren, which ultimately led to the brutal death of her grandson. You may ask “why blue?” She intended to never forget the battered, bruised bodies of her grandchildren. Blue serves as a constant reminder to fight for the protection of our children.

The story of Bonnie Finney demonstrates the effect that just one concerned citizen can have on raising awareness of child abuse and in promoting prevention. Since Bonnie Finney first tied that blue ribbon to her antenna in 1989, millions of people across the country have participated in blue ribbon campaigns. Each year, more people join the effort by wearing blue ribbons, encouraging others to wear and display them, and getting involved in community activities to “make people wonder” about the significance of the blue ribbon.

Every day, there are 375 reported cases of child abuse or child neglect in our state. In 2005 alone, more than 28,100 Michigan children were victimized, and nearly 20,000 children are in foster care. For every 1,000 children, 11 were victimized. These child victims averaged only 7 years old, and the most victimized were our state’s most vulnerable children, 0-4 years old.
No child should have to live in fear of abuse. We all must work together as a community to ensure that our children are safe and given a chance at childhood. Children are 100 percent of Michigan’s future. Every child deserves a healthy, safe environment in which to grow up, and it should be our collective mission to provide that in Michigan. Alison Fegan, Health Educator for Central Michigan District Health Department, asks that you tie on a blue ribbon to show your support of Child Abuse Prevention Month. Blue ribbons can be picked up at your local health department. For more information on Child Abuse Prevention Month activities going on in your community contact your local child abuse and neglect prevention council or visit www.michigan.gov/ctf.

This article was provided to you by the staff at Central Michigan District Health Department which serves the residents in Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.