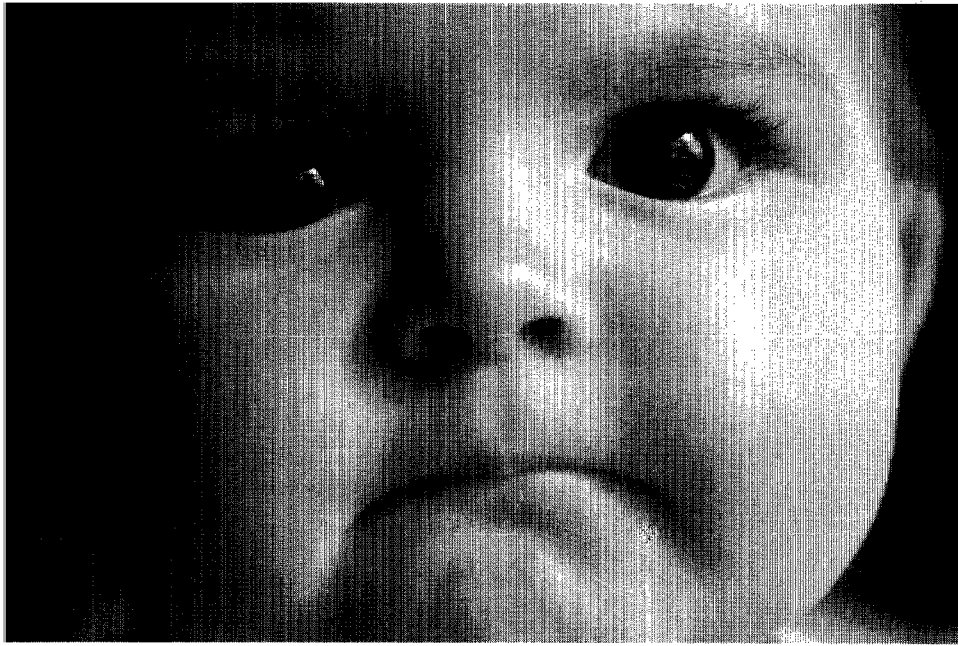


Kids House of Seminole



Needs Your Support

By Judi Klingman

Kids House of Seminole, Children's Advocacy Center, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides a variety of services to aid child abuse victims and their families. These services are provided in Kids House child friendly facility, located at 5467 N. Ronald Reagan Blvd., in Sanford. The goal of Kids House is to lessen the negative impact by providing a comfort zone in which these victims can begin to heal.

Kids House opened its doors in 1999, expanding last year into their state-of-the-art facility, made possible through the efforts of a dedicated professional staff and concerned citizens. Following 13 months of construction, they officially dedicated the 12,000 square foot Wayne Densch Family Trauma Center and committed it to the care and protection of our community's children. Toward this goal, Kids House has a number of programs that work together on cases: The Child Protection Team - Trained social workers who perform investigative services; Medical Trauma - Medical

professionals; Child Advocate - Trained social workers who work with families throughout their involvement with Kids House; Mental Health - Licensed mental health counselors; Family Connection - Trained social workers who focus on Prevention and Family Outreach. Together with law enforcement and judicial partners, Kids House provides a seamless approach to working with victims and their families.

In her message from the Executive Director, June 2007, Nancy Crawford says, "Child Abuse is a horrific type of pain and anguish that destroys childhood and creates a dynamic in our society that causes long range negative effects... Many of our children are just trying to survive in their own world of terror. We have to do all we can to stop child abuse." She quotes Margaret Mead, Anthropologist, "The solution of adult problems tomorrow depends in large measure upon the way our children grow up today. There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing when we save our children, we save ourselves."

The US Department of Health and Human Services estimates that two out of three incidents of abuse and neglect are not reported to authorities. Based on the 4000 reports of abuse and neglect received in Seminole County during the FY 2005-2006, approximately 8000 incidents remain unreported. During this same time period, Kids House served 665 victimized children, the largest age group being ages 11-15 (188); next largest ages 0-3 (155). In all except 3% of these cases, the offender's relationship was known to the victim--64% a parent or other relative.

According to Paul Finelli, Director of Development, community involvement is crucial to the success of Kids House. "It is your responsibility to report suspicions," he says. "Kids House can't be everyone, everywhere." He notes that teachers are often the first to detect abuse.

To name a few Tuscowillans who volunteer their time to Kids House, **Katie Weber**, a student at Winter Springs High School, has for the past six years made Easter baskets for the Kids. This year's total was 120 baskets! **Tom Muller** supports the Christmas Wish project by taking 100-150 paper snowman ornaments into the community and getting people to sponsor children by fulfilling their wishes listed on the snowmen. Watch for more about Kids House and these dedicated volunteers in a future issue of *Tuscowilla Today*.

In the meanwhile, Paul Finelli invites you to join Kids House for a "Walk in Their Shoes Tour." Tours are 45 minutes in length and are customarily held on Tuesday mornings at 8:00 a.m. You will meet the dedicated professionals committed to helping children, and Discover Kids House for yourself. Trust me. It is an overwhelming experience. Once you've "walked in their shoes," you will want to help. Contact Paul at (407) 324-3036, X237 to schedule a tour and learn how you can help. ♦