

What's new on our website...

CatawbaCountyCAC.org

- Save the Date for our fourth annual Denim & Diamonds fundraiser, to be held Saturday, May 14 at Lake Hickory Country Club.
- Photos of the Annual Donor Appreciation Luncheon and the Holiday Open House
- If you haven't done so yet, visit our website to sign up for the email newsletter that includes links to articles of interest.



NATIONAL  
CHILDREN'S  
ALLIANCE®

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MEMBER

*Has anyone ever described their job to you and you thought to yourself, "I never knew that job even existed; I never thought about someone doing that."*

I think that probably describes my job. I am a Family and a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and I have worked in both family practice and pediatric offices. But for almost 20 years, I have also worked with abused and neglected children. How did I begin this work? Eighteen years ago, I lived in the western North Carolina county with the highest rates of child abuse and neglect. The pediatricians in the county needed help addressing the need. A pediatrician asked me to get trained so I could help him see the children that DSS and/or law enforcement brought in and I accepted the challenge. About five years ago, I seriously pondered totally changing my work path, but doing this work is where my heart is. I do not think one could do it without such a feeling.

So what does my work entail? I get to interact with devoted social workers and law enforcement officers as I learn about the allegations and situations that have occurred in the child's life when they bring a child in to see me. At our Children's Advocacy Center, we work as a team, so that when a child and family come to the center, we may all interact with them in order to make their visit as comfortable as possible under the circumstances that brought them to the CAC. Kim Reinhardt, LPN, and I get historical information from the child and the parent/guardian. Even when the child has had a forensic interview (using sound techniques for questioning children about abuse and other sensitive subjects), I often ask him/her to tell me a condensed version of what has happened. During the physical exam, I am checking the child for signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. The findings are documented through the written word in the chart, drawings, and photographs. Further testing may be ordered. Often, past medical records are thoroughly reviewed. All of the information obtained



## My Role at the CAC (Continued from page 1.)

from the lengthy evaluation is carefully documented so that DSS, Law Enforcement, and our courts can make the best decisions regarding the children and families they are involved with. After the evaluation with the child/family, I may take part in team meetings to express my concerns about the particular child and I may be called to testify in different courts about the child's evaluation.

What I do is only a small part of the puzzle that fits in the whole decision-making process regarding the child's safety and wellness. I usually only see a child once or perhaps a handful of times. But I see the child at a critical time of their assessment. Recently I was examining the skin of a young boy who had been beaten with a belt on his arms, legs, and back. After he told me about his abuse, he asked me if I was hit with a belt when I was little. What do you say to a child when he looks so earnestly into your eyes and ask the purest of questions? I think you tell the truth. No, I was never hit with a belt. I wrapped my arms around this young boy and said, "And I am sorry you were hit with a belt but we are going to try and make sure that it won't happen again."

*Beth R. Osbahr, NP-BC  
Pediatric/Family Nurse Practitioner*



Dr. Kiran Harrill in the CAC's medical exam room. Dr. Harrill was instrumental in establishing the CAC's medical component in 2003 and in bringing Beth Osbahr to our CAC. She continues to support the CAC as a supervising physician.



Beth Osbahr  
with Heather Cash  
of HPD



## Director's Update

You may have noticed that it has been quite a while since we sent out our last newsletter. This is in part due to our administrative assistant position being vacant for nearly three months. Elizabeth resigned from her position in April after giving birth to a beautiful baby boy. In August we hired Amy Purdy, who comes to us with lots of experience and enthusiasm. Amy has been busy learning the many functions of the job the least of which is pulling together a newsletter. I am excited to present this newsletter because it contains articles from our staff that have been written through their eyes of service as well as through the eyes of the clients they serve. May you receive a blessing as you read these stories.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed in any way to the Children's Advocacy Center during 2010. It is only through your gifts of time, talent and treasure that we are able to offer hope to those we serve. I wish you all a wonderful New Year filled with good health, love and laughter.

*Deb*



As a Victim Advocate, I have sat with hundreds of family members in my office and listened to them tell their story of how child sexual abuse has devastated their family. For some families their visit to the CAC was the first time they ever dealt with the issue of child sexual abuse; for other families it is not, they have a personal experience of being sexually abused as a child or a history of sexual abuse in their family. The one thing all families have in common is that they never thought it would happen to their child. I always ask the family members if they ever talked to their child about sexual abuse. Most families have not. There are a lot of reasons why but the main reason is that **THEY DON'T KNOW HOW!!!**

Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children* is a prevention program that teaches adults how to protect children using a seven-step approach. **Step 3 is titled Talk about it.** This step answers parent's questions about when to start talking to your child and how to talk to your child about sexual abuse. Becoming a facilitator in Stewards of Children prevention program has given me an opportunity to reach families and children before they come to the CAC. I love hearing the responses to the training. The most common response is, "every adult needs to go through this training." At one of my recent trainings an elderly lady approached me and told me that she had just buried her sister. Before her sister died she told her that she had been sexually abuse by a family member. She said if I had this training when

I was younger I would have understood her behavior was a result of what was happening to her and maybe I could have helped. This training impacts the lives of people who attend. You will complete the training with the necessary tools to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

*Stewards of Children* emphasizes child safety as an adult's responsibility. Trainings are open to the public and are of specific interest among parents, youth sports organizations and coaches, camp counselors, youth service organizations, teachers and school personnel and faith centers. Each participant will be inspired to take personal responsibility in preventing this epidemic. Call today to schedule training. Remember the prevention of child sexual abuse belongs to each one of us. **To schedule a training contact the Children's Advocacy Center today at 828-465-7665.**

*Adrienne M. Opdyke,  
Victim's Advocate/ MDT Coordinator*

Stewards of Children training is available in two ways for your participation: take the training online at the Darkness to Light website, [www.D2L.org](http://www.D2L.org); or go to [www.CatawbaCountyCAC.org](http://www.CatawbaCountyCAC.org) for information on classes available in our community.



## Talking Helps

At 10 years old, Joey, decided “enough is enough”! He was tired of feeling scared all the time and tired of being touched. He finally told his Mom that his father had been sexually abusing him for a long time. While his parents had been divorced for several years, it was still difficult for his Mom to believe this could be happening. However, she listened and immediately called the police and DSS to report what her son had told her. They were interviewed at the CAC and referred for a medical exam. They were also given information about mental health treatment available at the CAC. Initially, Mom indicated that they would be fine and she didn't think Joey needed to keep talking about it, but she agreed to have an assessment with the therapist. That first appointment, Mom provided information about Joey's school functioning, his behavior, his mood, family information and any noted changes in mood or behavior. As the therapist, I provided some general information about potential trauma symptoms and the benefits of addressing them sooner rather than later. “Avoidance can seem like an attractive alternative when someone is dealing with the shock and rush of emotions that accompany disclosure of sexual abuse. Avoidance also seems to work, at least in the short-term; however, does nothing in the long-term to help children understand sexual abuse, deal with their feelings or thoughts about the abuse or to address the sense of guilt, shame and responsibility”. As we talked, Mom shared that Joey was, in fact, having bad dreams, having difficulty concentrating in class, had trouble leaving Mom's side and seemed to become more easily sad and angry.

Joey, like many kids, did well talking with me while playing with the toys. He openly talked about school, his family, things he liked to do and friends. He became hesitant when asked about why he originally came to the CAC and what he had shared with investigators. However, Joey went on to say “My Dad did something he wasn't

supposed to do and I didn't want it to happen anymore”. Over the next couple sessions, Joey shared that he often felt scared, didn't sleep well because of bad dreams and often “tried really hard” to not think about the abuse (but it didn't work). He would become startled at times when he'd see a truck like his dad drove or saw things that reminded him of being with his dad. He stated he felt sad a lot and wondered if what happened was his fault.



Over the next few weeks mom and Joey learned information about sexual abuse as well as coping skills that could help them manage negative thoughts and feelings. Joey developed a “feelings vocabulary” so that he could accurately identify and express his feelings. Another part of therapy would be to talk about how Joey felt about the abuse; making sure that Joey knows that the abuse was not his fault. Also, Joey would have the opportunity to share his story and process the abuse as he experienced it. His Mom is closely involved in therapy- learning things to help her, as well as learning how to best support Joey. Eventually, they were able to talk openly about the abuse, which would mean improving their communication in all areas. Finally, we talked about personal safety and who Joey could talk to and what he could do if he felt uncomfortable in a situation again. After a few sessions Joey said “I'm really glad I can come here and talk about things” and began to report that he felt less scared, less sad and was sleeping better. Mom agreed with Joey's report and stated she now knows that starting therapy was the best choice for both of them!

Joey and his Mom want people to know that “not talking about it” doesn't equal “dealing with” or “healing from” sexual abuse! Therapy can help!

*Karen Brown, LPA, CAC Therapist*

### Denim & Diamonds



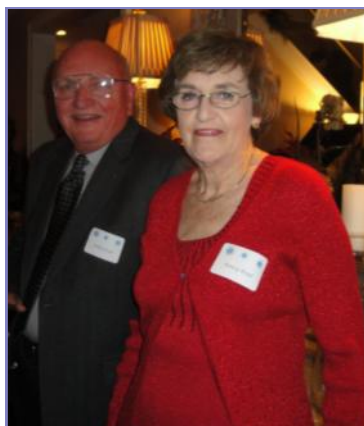
### Holiday Open House



Thank you to Judy White for hosting the CAC Holiday Open House Gathering in her lovely home.



Clockwise from above:  
Judy White with Bob and Paulette Inman, Andrea Benfield thanks our guest speaker, Charles and Ann Amann, Bobby and Nancy Boyd, Howard and Pat Anderson.



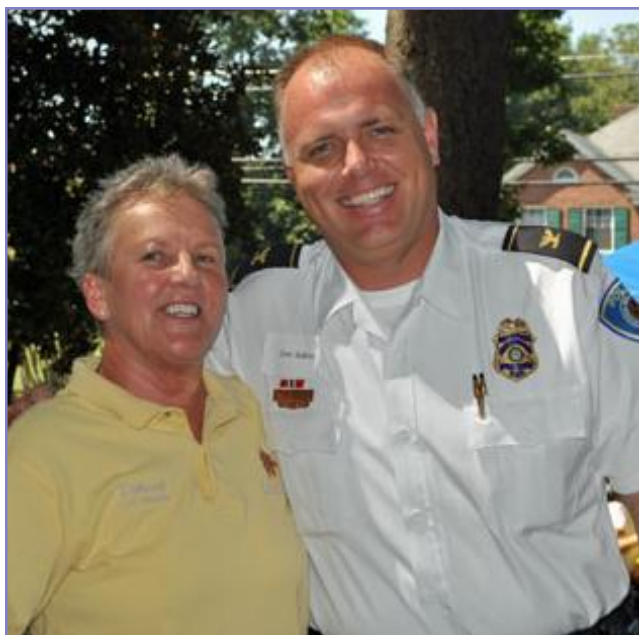
# We appreciate our donors and volunteers!



Laura Foster with her Kohl's volunteers.



Thank you to the Hickory Junior Woman's Club for adding to our playground.



At the Annual Donor Appreciation Luncheon, left to right: Deborah Johnson and Chief Tom Adkins, John Eller, Judy White, Capt. Thurman Whisnant, Beth Brandes, Andrea Benfield

# Thank You for Your Support in 2010!

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## Message from our Board Chair

Happy New Year! I hope you were able to enjoy a beautiful holiday season and spend meaningful time with those you love.

For many, the start of a new year is a time of reflection and resolution. As I reflect back on 2010 I am reminded of how the issues of child abuse and neglect have been highlighted in the media. Locally, we have learned of the abuse and neglect endured by a 10 year old girl from Australia, whose smile could light up a room. Nationally, Mr. Tyler Perry, an accomplished actor and producer, disclosed on *The Oprah Show* the brutal physical abuse and sexual abuse he suffered during his childhood. These stories are very disturbing and difficult to listen to, making them easy to ignore. But the first step in effectively managing these issues is by raising public awareness. Instead of closing your mind and heart, challenge yourself to learn about the complexities surrounding child physical and sexual abuse. It is through education that we are better able to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to signs of child physical and sexual abuse. Take the next step. Resolve to be better informed!

The Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County offers Darkness to Light, a program which raises awareness of the prevalence and consequences of child sexual abuse by educating adults about the steps they can take to protect, recognize and react responsibly to the reality of child sexual abuse. For more information contact Adrienne Opdyke, Victim's Advocate at 828-465-7665 or email her at [aopdyke@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:aopdyke@catawbacountync.gov).

Sincerely,

*Mary Jo Wiley*

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