

— Newsletter —

# Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center



## Season of Gratitude

As we approach the end of the year, the Children's Advocacy Center would like to express our gratitude to all of our supporters. It is because of your generous donations and unwavering support that we are able to continue our mission of helping children and families in need. We are humbled by your generosity and grateful for your partnership in creating a safer and healthier community. The Children's Advocacy Center was able to help over 516 children as of the end of September 2023.

Thank you for all that you do and we wish you a joyful and peaceful holiday season!



Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center  
300 S. Canal St. Leesburg, FL. 34748  
Phone: (352) 323- 8303  
[www.cac4kids.org](http://www.cac4kids.org)



# COUNSELING CORNER

## Tackle Holiday Stress

With the holidays approaching, it is easy to get caught in the whirlwind of obligations and wish lists. Take a moment to remember the best gift is spending time with loved ones and to keep expectations realistic.

**When possible, find ways for the children to help with the preparations.** Provide clear directions of how they can help, whether it be handing or hanging ornaments, mixing ingredients for a dish, or selecting paper for wrapping gift.

**If traveling, prepare in advance.** Prepare your children for the changes in the routines by letting them know what to expect and what you expect of them. Bring travel-friendly snacks, games, familiar toys, and books. Allow for short breaks along the way and keep bedtime routines as much as possible.

**Be flexible.** As the dynamics of the family change, so do family traditions. Have conversations as to which traditions may need to evolve to make them more enjoyable for everyone.

**Support your child's need to maintain their own boundaries.** Hugs are not for everyone. This is a perfect opportunity to help your child practice assertive communication such as, "I'd prefer a handshake or high-five instead."



## CPT NEWS



Our Child Protection Team (CPT) consist of a Medical Director (Dalpo Soremi), Team Coordinator (Regina Berry), Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Supervisor (Heather Palasky), Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (Holly Bonyng), Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (Daniela Cobb), Senior Case Coordinator (Cori Sholl), Case Coordinator Logan Kovacic, Case Coordinator Megan Sweat, Case Coordinator (Awilda Echevarria) and Data Entry Specialist (Jessica Priebe).

As the experts in child abuse and neglect assessments, CPT performs our vital services through specialized interviews (w/ caregivers and or extremely younger children), forensic interviews and medical examinations. Our case coordinators and medical team assist our community partners in determining abuse or neglect and if a child is safe in their environment. We also make service recommendations for family change to help improved family functioning and overall child safety.

In an effort to promote community visibility and increase the public's awareness of child abuse and its proper reporting procedures, CPT recently participated in the following events:

- **National Night Out** - sponsored by the Leesburg Police Department, we gave away toys, informed the public about our services and sat up an informational table with take away handouts, bracelets, pins and brochures.
- **Lake County's Walk For Freedom** - sponsored by A2I and the Father's House Church, we walked in solidarity against human trafficking and displayed an informational table to help educate the community on our services. Our CPT also hosts multidisciplinary team staffings to collaborate with our community partners where we strategize the best plan(s) for children who are recovered, deemed at risk or currently trafficked.
- **The Great Scarecrow Build-Off and Expo** - sponsored by the Leesburg Partnership, we built two scarecrows (an adult and child) in support of the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center (LSCAC). The scarecrows were displayed on the corner of canal and main street during the month of October.

Our main office is located in Leesburg but we have satellite locations in Sumter County, Clermont and soon will open offices with our community partners in Tavares and Mount Dora. CPT satellite locations allow families to be served where they live in a familiar community environment and be relieved of inordinate transportation costs.

See something say something, the protection of children is everyone's responsibility. If you suspect abuse or neglect,  
**Please Call 1-800-96ABUSE.**



# ADVOCATE CORNER

As a family advocate at the children's advocacy center, I would like to thank everyone who has supported our program and given their time and resources to assist our families of Lake & Sumter counties.

The impact on our families is unmeasurable.

Thank you!



## Don't Forget "You"

The holiday season can be a stressful time for everyone, but especially for parents and caregivers of children. As a Family Advocate, we recognize the importance of self-care and want to offer some tips to help support parents and caregivers during this holiday season.

1. **Schedule time for yourself:** It's important to set aside time for yourself to recharge. Whether it's taking a warm bath, reading a book, or going for a walk, make sure you prioritize self-care.
2. **Connect with others:** It can be helpful to talk to other caregivers who may be going through similar experiences. Consider joining a support group or reaching out to friends and family for support.
3. **Practice mindfulness:** Taking a few minutes each day to practice mindfulness can help reduce stress and anxiety. Consider trying a guided meditation or simply taking a few deep breaths.
4. **Set realistic expectations:** The holidays can be a busy time, but it's important to set realistic expectations for yourself and your family. Don't feel pressured to do everything, and remember that it's okay to say no.

By prioritizing self-care, connecting with others, practicing mindfulness, and setting realistic expectations, caregivers can better support themselves and their families during the holiday season.



## The Importance of Family Advocacy

As of September 30, 2023, we have served **399** caregivers and parents this year. We are proud to have been able to provide support and resources to these individuals who work tirelessly to care for their children and family as they are healing from their trauma experience. Our mission has always been to make the caregiver and parents' healing journey a little bit easier, and we are grateful to have been able to do so for so many this year.

To Learn More About Child Abuse visit the  
National Children's Alliance Website at;  
[www.nationalchildrensalliance.org](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org)



# CENTER HAPPENINGS

## The Great Scarecrow

We are excited to announce that our CAC Staff participated in The Great Scarecrow Build-Off, sponsored by the Leesburg Partnership. Our Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center Scarecrow was found at the corner of Main Street and Canal Street in downtown Leesburg, where it was displayed throughout the month of October. Thank you to the Leesburg Partnership for this opportunity to showcase our organization!



## National Night Out 2023

Our Child Protection Team had a fantastic time participating in the National Night Out on October 3rd, 2023 at the Venetian Gardens, sponsored by the Leesburg Police Department. The event was a success, and we extend our thanks to all members of the community who came out to visit our booth on Ski Beach. It was an excellent opportunity for our team to connect with the community and spread awareness about child protection. We hope to participate in future events like this to continue to promote our cause.



Check out our facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/cac4kidsfl>



# MORE CENTER HAPPENINGS

## Back to School Happenings

Our Victim Advocate and Counseling departments recently participated in the Back to School Expo in August at the Minneola City Hall. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to connect with the community and meet with children as they prepared to head back to school. We were able to provide important information and resources to parents and children alike, and also distributed school supplies to those in need. We are grateful for the opportunity to give back to our community in this way.



Additionally, more than

**54**



back packs were given to the children who received services at the Advocacy center.

Save the Date



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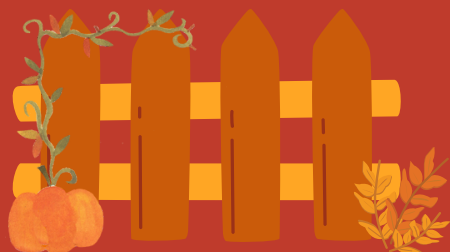


## Bids 4 Kids

We are excited to announce our upcoming Bids for Kids fundraiser auction, which will take place on March 9, 2024. This event is a great opportunity to support our organization and help us make a difference in the lives of children in need.

The online portion of the auction will open on March 7, 2024, so be sure to mark your calendars and get ready to bid on some amazing items.

Stay tuned for more details!



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