



# The Chronicle

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHILDREN'S  
ADVOCACY CENTERS OF GEORGIA

Volume 4, Issue 1, May 2011

*Our Vision: When abuse is reported,  
every child in Georgia will have access  
to the services provided by a Children's  
Advocacy Center.*



Above: Attorney General Sam  
Olens; Jinger Robins, CACGA  
chairwoman

Top right: Kellen Cooper of  
SafePath CAC, First Lady Sandra  
Deal

Lower right: Sen. Vincent Fort  
(D-Atlanta); Cynthia D. Howell,  
CEO CACGA; Nancy Chandler,  
CACGA board member

## CACs Strengthen Bonds at Annual Legislative Day

In a commitment to supporting and protecting children, child advocates and concerned citizens came together at the state capitol during Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia's annual legislative day on February 16, 2011. More than 100 people, including the state's first lady, Sandra Deal and legislators gathered at the event.

Attendees met with their legislators on the capitol floor, discussed the issues at a luncheon and rallied together for more positive changes in the future. The primary goal of the day was to build coalitions that support Children's Advocacy Centers, protect children and stand with families who are recovering from trauma of abuse. By working together, CACGA believes we move closer to a place that holds children in the highest regard.

"CACGA believes that we can protect children and their dreams if private citizens, legislators, corporations and communities join forces to ensure that comprehensive and compassionate services are available in all communities for victims of child abuse," said Cynthia D. Howell, chief executive officer of Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia.

In addition to building coalitions, CACGA also used the day to thank and honor guests for their support of Children's Advocacy Centers and for working so diligently to ensure our communities and laws protect Georgia's children.

Carly Floyd, who was crowned Miss Onion Capital this past year, also believes in CACGA's mission. She was at the legislative event to lend her support for a cause that she has adopted as her platform. Her goal is to emphasize CACs on a national level and to attract more funding to non-profits that work to end the cycle of child abuse.

"I knew that it was something that I could be



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passionate about and definitely something that needed to be promoted throughout our community, and that deserves attention," she said.

Floyd said it was the first time she attended such an event, and that she was glad for the opportunity to share her passion with others.

Georgia State Sen. Josh McKoon, who represents District 29, said the work of CACs is worthy of support and praise. Children who have been victimized depend on efforts such as these, he added. McKoon knows of many of these unsettling stories from his mother, who is a victim's rights advocate in Alabama. *(continued page 5)*

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## upcoming events

May 11, 2011

Board of Directors  
Meeting  
Marietta

May 12, 2011

Quarterly Member  
Center Meeting  
Macon

July 27, 2011

Board of Directors  
Meeting  
Savannah

July 27-28, 2011

Strategic Planning  
Retreat  
Savannah

July 29, 2011

Membership Tune Up  
Savannah

## Chairwoman's Report



Jinger Robins

Leading an organization with such a rich history, excellent reputation and promising future is a responsibility I take very seriously. The road we have traveled offers many lessons to help our

board envision where we can go. Part of my responsibility will be maintaining a path for successful board governance and solid board performance.

“The Times They are a Changin’,” the title of a well-known song by Bob Dylan, says it best. Those words represent what every organization, business, and corporation, whether public or private, already know and are paying close attention to. Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia (CACGA) has a past that empowers us, a present that creates daily challenges, and a future that energizes and motivates our board.

**Understanding one’s role as a board member and being able to honor good principles of governance is essential in building a solid board, as times are changing.**

As the board of a statewide organization, we are charged with doing all we can to see that our government leaders accept their part of the responsibility for ensuring the safety of our children. However, as a nonprofit board we are both individually and collectively responsible for ensuring that we are governing in a manner that accepts full responsibility for accountability, transparency, solid leadership, funding diversity, and continuous improvement.

Strategic board recruitment and development is essential to solid board governance. As chairwoman of CACGA, I want to encourage active involvement in our efforts to recruit board candidates who have a passion for our organization’s mission, relevant skill sets, and

a willingness and ability to help the organization financially. Understanding one’s role as a board member and being able to honor good principles of governance is essential in building a solid board, as times are changing. We owe it to our children to stay ahead of the times.

Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia is a visionary organization. It is changing the way the state of Georgia approaches the issue of child abuse. As a board, we have to be sure to celebrate our past successes, be aware and proud of our current initiatives and continue to dream about our future possibilities.

### **Current Initiatives:**

**Telehealth Equipment** – Building diversity and capacity of medical providers in the state of Georgia trained in child physical and sexual abuse

**Mental Health Services** – Building diversity and capacity of mental health providers through the use of trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy with victims of child physical and sexual abuse

**Funding Diversity** - Planning and developing a comprehensive and diverse fund development plan

**Child Advocacy Center Development** – Exploring and developing additional strategies for Children’s Advocacy Centers and expanding services of existing advocacy centers

**Multidisciplinary Team Information System (MDTIS)** – Providing state-of-the-art technology in Georgia, the only state to use a web-based case tracking system to monitor and manage cases related to child abuse and child sexual exploitation

**Children’s Advocacy Center of Excellence** – Partnering to ensure stability for all professionals in the field of child abuse

Come senators, congressmen  
Please heed the call  
Don’t stand in the doorway  
Don’t block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt  
Will be he who has stalled  
There’s a battle outside  
And it is ragin’  
It’ll soon shake your windows  
And rattle your walls  
For the times they are a-changin’  
— Bob Dylan

# Chief Executive Officer’s Report



Cynthia D. Howell

“**Hold Fast to Dreams**” is a poem written by Langston Hughes, an American writer, poet and essayist. As a third-grader living in Cape Cod, Mass., I was required to learn and recite the first verse that concludes with

“for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.” The poem has become a staple among motivational and inspirational quotes. Although it has been one of my favorite poems for quite a long time, it is only recently that I actually began to understand the true meaning and essence of what Langston Hughes was trying to say.

The poem has a special and personal meaning in the world of child advocacy. Children in our community or sphere of influence are like the “birds” in Hughes’s poem. They have the potential to become eagles, the most powerful airborne creatures in the world. Children’s potentials are only limited by their imaginations and dreams. However, I am reminded of a quote by the novelist, Robert James Waller who said “life is never easy for those who dream.” When a child is a victim of abuse, it is comparable to someone throwing a rock and hitting a bird in midflight. After the bird is struck, it plummets down to the earth and is grounded. If the bird doesn’t die from the drop, it will limp around wounded, subject to falling victim to predators. In other words, when children are victims of child abuse they have physical and/or emotional wounds that may jeopardize their abilities to achieve their dreams – “a broken winged bird that cannot fly.”

Research shows, however, that if a bird’s wing is recently broken, it can be repaired if the bird is entrusted to the proper personnel who not only take care of the physical requirements but also provide tender loving care. Conversely, victims of child abuse can have their “broken wings” mended and rehabilitated by those who have the training and resources necessary to implement the appropriate clinical, medical, and judicial courses of action.

Children’s Advocacy Centers specialize in mending broken wings. By design, Children’s Advocacy Centers put the needs of children first and bring together, in one location, experienced professionals, who provide comprehensive and compassionate services to victims of child abuse and their families. When children and families arrive at a Children’s Advocacy Center, they find caring professionals who are committed to helping children through the trauma of abuse.

In another poem, Langston Hughes wrote “when people care for you and cry for you, they can straighten out your soul.” Teams at each of our Children’s Advocacy Centers do what they do because they genuinely care about the children they serve.

They know that children deserve to have dreams, and that they deserve to soar.

I want to thank each of our CACs, staff and multidisciplinary team members for continuing to use your skills to properly mend broken wings and making it possible for children to grow up to become eagles. You make miracles happen.

We all are indebted to you.

In 2010 alone, CACs provided critical services to more than 9,970 children and family members. The services provided included more than 7,060 forensic interviews, which represents a 44 percent increase since 2001 (Figure 1).

Other relevant data reported in 2010 revealed that 17 percent of alleged victims of child abuse were not old enough to attend kindergarten (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Forensic Interviews Conducted by Year

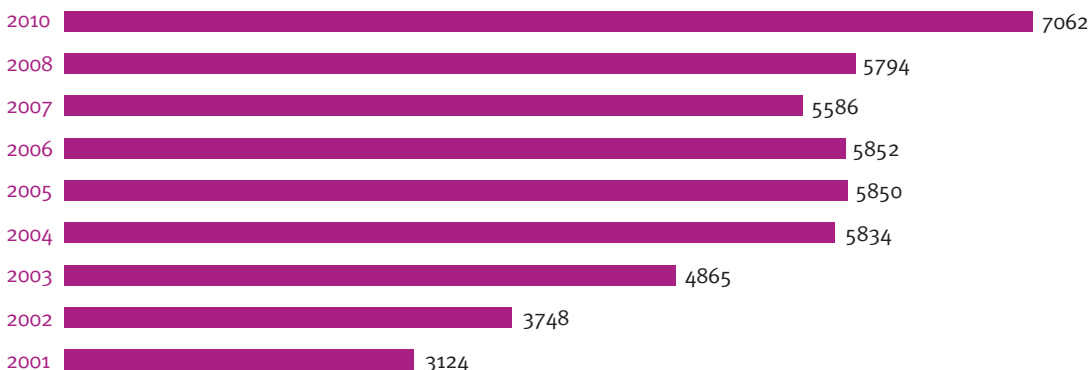
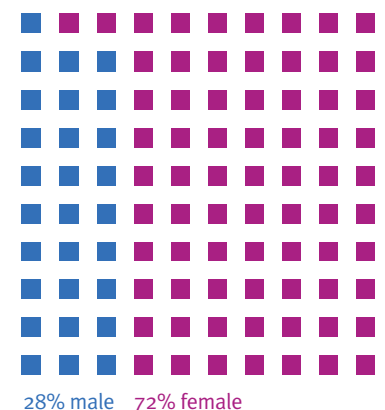


Figure 2: Alleged Victims by Gender



## Chief Executive Officer’s Report

Children’s Advocacy Centers put the needs of children first and bring together, in one location, experienced professionals, who provide comprehensive and compassionate services to victims of child abuse and their families.

*(continued from page 3)*

SINCE OUR INCEPTION IN 1989, our network of Children’s Advocacy Centers has increased eightfold and currently has 36 full members, three associate members. Since we began tracking statewide data in 2001, CACs in Georgia have conducted more than 50,000 forensic interviews.

In 2010 alone, CACs provided critical services to more than 9,970 children and family members. The services provided included more than 7,060 forensic interviews, which represents a 44 percent increase since 2001.

Other relevant data reported in 2010 revealed that:

- Eighty-two (82) percent of the alleged victims of child abuse were females and 28 percent were males (Figure 2).
- Sixty-six (66) percent of the alleged child abuse victims were under the age of 12 (Figure 3).
- Eighty-two (82) percent of the alleged types were sexual, 15 percent were physical and the remainder categorized as “other” such as child pornography, CSEC, etc. (Figure 4).
- CAC investigations enhanced prosecutions where abuse was disclosed (66 percent of cases in 2010), but they also prevented unwarranted prosecution where abuse was not disclosed (34 percent of the cases in 2010)–(Figure 5).

## By the Numbers

Figure 3: Alleged Victims by Age

*66 percent of CAC clients were under 12 years of age  
17 percent of children were not old enough to attend kindergarten*



Figure 4: Alleged Abuse Types

*82 percent of alleged abuse types were sexual abuse  
15 percent physical abuse and three percent other abuse types*



Figure 5: Forensic Interview Outcomes

*CAC investigations enhanced prosecutions where abuse was disclosed (66 percent of cases in 2010), but they also prevented unwarranted prosecution where abuse was not disclosed (34 percent of the cases in 2010).*



**Legislative Day** *(continued from cover story)*

Koon said that Children's Advocacy Centers "not only give a voice to these children," but that they also provide safe havens for families to rebuild their lives and free themselves from abuse. "I think it's one of the most important things around for us to highlight how vital these centers are all over this state to protect the future of those children," he said.

**Bills we supported this legislative session:**

**HB 162** introduced by Rep. Ann Purcell (R-Rincon) prohibits persons who are required to register on the state sexual offender registry from photographing a minor without the permission of the minor's parent. A sex offender who violates this provision is guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

**HB 200** introduced by Rep. Ed Lindsey (R-Atlanta) clarifies the definition of sexual servitude and expands Georgia's forfeiture law to allow its use to combat sexual trafficking. The legislation also increases the penalties for individuals promoting underage prostitution. Additionally, this bill treats those that have been subjected to sexual servitude with compassion by providing victims a pathway out of their criminally forced servitude.

**SB 94 (formally HB 185)** introduced by Rep. Tom Weldon (R-Ringgold) amended the Runaway Youth Safety Act to include delinquent children as well as deprived children to the protections afforded to this act. The bill allows shelters to take in runaway and homeless children in for up to 72 hours without notifying the parents or DFCS. It

also holds service providers accountable for custodial interference where the service provider fails to either contact the parents of a runaway child or makes a report of child abuse where the service provider has reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused within 72 hours of contact with the child.

**HB 503** sponsored by the Governor's Floor Leader Rep. Amy Carter (R-Valdosta) and brought on behalf of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council sought to provide for funding of forensic medical examinations in certain sexual offenses by Georgia Crime Victims' emergency fund.

All the aforementioned bills passed during the 2010-2011 legislative session.

CACGA extends a special thank you to the sponsors of this year's Annual Legislative Day: Moose Exhibits, Barton Malow and Andrew H. Agatston, P.C.



Jon DuMond, director of finance and operations, Lily Pad; Karen Kemp, executive director, Lily Pad; Rep. Winfred Dukes (D-Albany); Cynthia D. Howell, CEO CACGA; Rep. Ed Rynders (R-Albany); Amy Boney, regional director of CACs, Lily Pad; Jennifer Crews, program director, South GA CAC, division of Lily Pad; Jinger Robins, CACGA chairwoman and executive director, SafePath Children's Advocacy Center in Marietta

**Other special guests and elected officials in attendance at the Annual Legislative Day**

- Attorney General Sam Olens
- Sen. Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro)
- Sen. Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta)
- Sen. Greg Goggans (R-Douglas)
- Sen. Tim Golden (R-Valdosta)
- Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville)
- Sen. Joshua McKoon (R-Columbus)
- Rep. Kathy Ashe (D-Atlanta)
- Rep. Sharon Beasley-Teague (D-Red Oak)
- Rep. Ellis Black (R-Valdosta)
- Rep. Tyrone Brooks (D-Atlanta)
- Rep. Roger Bruce (D-Atlanta)
- Rep. Christian Coomer (R-Cartersville)
- Rep. Elly Dobbs (D-Atlanta)
- Rep. Winfred Dukes (D-Albany)
- Rep. Delvis Dutton (R-Glenncville)
- Rep. Harry Geisinger (R-Roswell)
- Rep. Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin)
- Rep. Keith Heard (D-Athens)
- Rep. Scott Holcomb (D-Atlanta)
- Rep. Darryl Jordan (D-Riverdale)
- Rep. Judy Manning (R-Marietta)
- Rep. Tony McBrayer (R-Tifton)
- Rep. Allen Peake (R-Macon)
- Rep. Paulette Rakeshaw-Braddock (R-Hiram)
- Rep. Ed Rynders (R-Albany)
- Rep. Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville)
- Kermit McManus – District Attorney, Conasauga Circuit
- Commissioner Will Beattie, Gilmer County

**News and Announcements**

**CACGA welcomes our newest center director: Victoria Scoggins**, Interim Director, Child Advocacy Center of the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit, Fort Oglethorpe, Ga.

**CACGA also extends special congratulations to Leila Bragg**, medical coordinator and family nurse practitioner for Sunshine House CAC in Swainsboro. She received the National Children's Advocacy Center Outstanding Service Award for Medical Care, given to professionals for their tremendous contributions to the collaborative multidisciplinary response to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

*Albany, Georgia***Firefly House Children's Advocacy Center**

Firefly House CAC children's waiting room

**Pictured left to right:**

Caitlyn Cooper

*Tree House Program Coordinator*

Tamikia Clements

*ASU Social Work Intern*

Amanda West

*Advocacy Coordinator*

Candy Bell

*Clinical Director*

Tisha Williams

*Intake Specialist*

Donya Duckworth

*Family Resource Navigator*

Sara Garver

*Forensic Interviewer*

Amy Boney

*Regional CAC Director*

Tonia Jacobs

*CAC Program Coordinator*

Hundreds of children each year come through the door of the Firefly House, a division of Lily Pad, Inc., with bruised, battered bodies and broken hearts. Their mothers follow with faces that reflect the sadness that only comes from a particular kind of heartbreak. They are the misunderstood of this world, and therefore the mistreated. There is initial confusion on their faces as they enter a warm, family friendly environment where trained advocates greet them with a smile. Children are taken to a kitchen for a snack and then ushered into a playroom while parents sit down with advocates to determine family needs. Forensic interviewers meet with law enforcement and Department of Family and Children Services workers to begin the joint child abuse investigation. The forensic nurse examiner is alerted to prepare for a potential examination in our child-friendly exam room. It all begins at the Children's Advocacy Center.

Firefly House, located in Dougherty County, sits at the heart of the poorest congressional district in Georgia and the ninth poorest congressional district in America. This is not news to the citizens of the county. This culture of poverty puts children at great risk of child abuse, child sexual assault, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, domestic violence, not graduating from high school and a never-ending cycle of exploitation. Firefly House collaborates with many agencies to provide a system of care to wrap around children and their families, helping them navigate a complex social service system. The staff and volunteers of Firefly House seek to make each child a respected individual rather than a number.

An example of the comprehensive nature of our work is the Smith family. Ms. Smith is the mother of five children ranging from 5 to 17 years of age. Her 7- and 8-year-old girls came to her last year and told her their father had been sexually abusing them while she worked. She immediately took them to the hospital, and hospital personnel followed the Dougherty County Child Abuse Protocol and alerted the proper authorities. This working class family almost immediately lost the stability they struggled to maintain for years. The abuser was a caretaker and earned half the income in the home. When he was incarcerated, the family was financially devastated, and the mother lost her natural resource for child care, who was the father and also the offender.

Ms. Smith was offered therapy for herself, as well as her children. The center booked follow-up appointments for the medical care the children needed. This mother was grateful for those essential

services; however, the literal survival of her family was at stake as she could not provide the necessities of food, clothing and shelter. This came to light when the advocacy coordinator called the home to follow up with the mother regarding counseling appointments. Counseling and medical follow-up were needed, but payment of rent and utilities, school uniforms for the children, car repair and food were critical. During an 18-month period, the advocacy coordinator worked with this parent to help her in the navigation of elusive services.

Through relationships forged with the board of directors of the Lily Pad (the umbrella organization for Firefly House) and the multidisciplinary team, the family stabilized and is now self-sufficient again.

This family taught us that a therapy referral is of no use if the car will not crank to travel there. The extension for payment from the utility department is of no use if there are no job prospects in sight.

**Firefly House collaborates with many agencies to provide a system of care to wrap around children and their families, helping them navigate a complex social service system.**

Medical follow-up is essential, but of no use if the prescriptions cannot be paid for. Homework is difficult if not impossible when young stomachs growl due to emptiness. It is difficult to make homework neat when there is no table at which to sit to complete assignments. All seemed lost to the oldest child who excelled in school and was offered an opportunity to join an elite group of students at the local university, when he did not have the required uniform to wear.

Through partnerships, advocates, caring community members, churches and anonymous donors, this family survived and has begun to heal. The girls continue in therapy. One still passes the therapist notes as she cannot form the words to describe aloud what her father did to her. Their bodies maintain the scars, but their hearts are healing. The girls' brothers still struggle from time to time, as they never knew what their father was doing to their sisters. They've carried guilt because they thought they should have known. They, too, have begun to flourish as young men do when they have strong women in their lives. Ms. Smith finds more strength every day when she remembers that she has 50 years of freedom from the man that took her girls'

innocence. She still checks in with the staff at the Firefly House from time to time. This family has great strength, perseverance and love for each other. We are honored that Firefly House provided light on their journey from victims to survivors.

There are hundreds of stories like the Smiths. Since the doors of the Firefly House opened in June 2008, more than 1,100 children have been served. We are blessed with a phenomenal staff and dedicated, compassionate volunteers. Forensic interviews, advocacy, forensic medical evaluations support groups and case reviews are all provided under one roof. Firefly House has become a premier authority on child abuse, and media, civic groups, schools, law enforcement and social service organizations seek out agency staff to provide training and information. We believe the first step in preventing child abuse is shining a bright light on the issue and educating the public.

The costs of delivering comprehensive services for children who are victims of child abuse and their families is increasing exponentially at the same time that demand for our services is at an all-time high. In an effort to control costs and generate revenue,



Firefly House has formed a strategic partnership with South Georgia Children's Advocacy Center in Cairo, Ga. A satellite program has opened in Thomasville, Ga., called The Treehouse, and both of these centers are now a part of the Lily Pad family of Children's Advocacy Centers. This collaboration is the result of a visionary board of directors in three communities who came together to form this strategic alliance for the benefit of children and families in southwest Georgia.

Above: Home Builders Association of Albany at a ground-breaking ceremony on March 3, 2011. The association is building a 2,400-square-foot home worth \$250,000 to be raffled off in June. Proceeds will benefit the Firefly House CAC.

## Warner Robins, Georgia

### Rainbow House Children's Resource Center

In 1981, a group of citizens concerned about child sexual abuse in the community joined together as the Houston County Child Sex Abuse Task Force. Concerned citizens, police and therapists were among those in the task force. On August 2, 1985, the group was incorporated as the Houston County Sex Abuse Council, Inc.

After an initial emphasis on professional education and public awareness, it became clear that a central, neutral interview facility was needed. The city of Warner Robins then rented a house to the group. Volunteers helped to renovate and furnish the facility, and on April 1, 1986, Rainbow House opened. The corporation changed its name to Rainbow House Children's Resource Center, Inc., on August 14, 1989. On April 1, 2011, the organization celebrated 25 years. Throughout the month of April, we also honored the nation's Child Abuse Prevention Month. Several local mayors signed a proclamation declaring the month's importance, and we also placed pinwheels in the lawn of the Houston Medical Center to represent

After 25 years, Rainbow House Children's Resource Center's commitment to strengthen their community's response to child abuse and neglect through prevention, intervention, and advocacy efforts remains steady.

children who were victims of child abuse last year. (Pinwheels for Prevention is a national campaign of Prevent Child Abuse America.) In addition, we held our first "No Excuse for Child Abuse Run" at Middle Georgia Technical College and honored advocacy efforts at our eighth annual Power of Prevention Night, among other activities during April.

After 25 years, our commitment to strengthen our community's response to child abuse and neglect through prevention, intervention, and advocacy efforts remains steady. What started in 1986 as a goal to end child abuse continues today. We celebrate that goal, and hope one day to eradicate child maltreatment from our society. Won't you join us?

*Macon, Georgia***Crescent House**

Dr. Yameika Head, Medical Director, Crescent House

Like most businesses these days, The Crescent House in Macon, Ga., has had to adjust to its own share of changes. After several interim medical directors, we are pleased to announce the addition of Dr. Yameika Head. Originally from Warner Robins, Ga., Head has returned to the central Georgia area to continue her passion for working with abused children and their families as medical director of The Crescent House and as assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Mercer University's School of Medicine. Head is one of only a handful of forensically trained pediatricians in the United States and brings a wealth of knowledge in this field to us now.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in science from Xavier University in Louisiana, she moved to Nashville, Tenn., and attended Meharry Medical College, obtaining her medical degree. Her love for working with children began during medical school and continued with a pediatric residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, Texas, which also included a year as chief resident. During this time her true passion for working with abused children developed, and she continued her training as a fellow in pediatric forensic medicine at Louisiana State University's Health Sciences Center. After completing the fellowship in 2008, Head was appointed to the faculty and worked as a forensic

pediatrician at the Audrey Hepburn CARE center at Children's Hospital of New Orleans.

Throughout her career, Head has conducted numerous child abuse lectures and presentations at various conferences, workshops and classes on both the national and local level. Topics have ranged from forensic implications of sexually transmitted diseases, and preparing families for medical examinations. She most recently gave a presentation at the CACGA conference for medical providers this past January.

Since returning to Georgia in early 2010, Head has quickly established herself as an important part of CACGA's medical movement by attending one of the committees new medical standards forums her first week on the job. She also has conducted many training sessions for multidisciplinary teams throughout the area.

In her personal time, Head enjoys spending time with her friends and family here in Georgia. She is also an avid New Orleans Saints fan and shoe fashionista. In addition to her dedication to working in the field of forensic pediatrics, she now has a new dedication to increasing the medical offerings for all CACs in Georgia and to making The Crescent House one of the premiere Children's Advocacy Centers in the central Georgia area.

*Marietta, Georgia***SafePath Children's Advocacy Center**

SafePath was selected by Georgia Association of Homes and Services for its 2010 Outstanding Agency Award.

**Outstanding Agency Award**

SafePath Children's Advocacy Center is pleased to announce that the Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children selected our center as its 2010 Outstanding Agency Award recipient. The award honors an agency that has demonstrated outstanding service to children, and it was presented at the Georgia Conference on Children and Families celebration luncheon in November.



State Court Judge Jason Fincher and wife Deena Fincher attend Gov. Nathan Deal's Day of Service.

**Day of Service**

To kick off his inaugural celebration, Gov. Nathan Deal began with a Great Day of Service to encourage volunteers throughout the state to come together and give back to their communities. SafePath Children's Advocacy Center was one of 35 local organizations chosen to participate in the service initiative. Gov. Deal visited the center leading up to the event.

About 50 volunteers came to SafePath to create child friendly canvases to brighten the walls of the center. Attorney General Sam Olens stopped by SafePath to show his support and volunteers included, state Reps. Judy Manning and Sam Teasley, Cobb Commissioner Helen Goreham, State Court Judge Jason Fincher and several community members. They all came together wanting to make a difference.

To learn more about SafePath visit [www.supportsafepath.com](http://www.supportsafepath.com)

*Atlanta, Georgia***Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Child Protection Center**

In 2010, staff at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Child Protection Center sat in a meeting and began sharing our similar feelings of distress involving several children and families we previously encountered. They were families who came to our center for forensic interviews and examinations, and they were in desperate need of basic items such as suitable clothing or food.

We recalled the 5-year-old boy who continuously asked staff for additional crackers and juice, and he was later observed pulling the food from his pockets and giving it to his siblings and mother who were sitting in the waiting area. Then we recounted the numerous children who had soiled or tattered clothing and underclothes. To realize a child is without food or adequate clothing is disheartening, but to have the lack of resources to help meet a need is egregious.

**To realize a child is without food or adequate clothing is disheartening, but to have the lack of resources to help meet a need is egregious. We thought some thing had to be done, but what?**

We thought some thing had to be done, but what? Quickly, Millicent Taylor, one of our staff members, came up with a wonderful idea and suggested that we purchase book bags and fill them with items such as a sweat suit, toiletries and food items. Staff was overjoyed with the idea, and our book bag project was created.

Several staff members began sharing ideas about the project with their families, and the excitement became contagious. Pearl Culberson, a patient care technician, explained to staff that her daughter and son-in-law, LaToya and Michael Metheny, who are stationed in Germany, eagerly wanted to help. The Methenys purchased 27 book bags (in a vast array of colors) and shipped them to our center. Additionally, they mailed socks, underclothes, combs, brushes and toiletries all from Germany. With enthusiasm escalating, Kelli Wood, a forensic specialist asked her husband, Lathan Wood, a gospel choir director at Georgia State University, if he would be interested in sponsoring the center at one of the choir's largest concerts. He immediately responded yes. Staff purchased sweat suits, comfy socks and food items.



Kara Klein, a child life specialist, located several journals and pens to place in the bags, as well. Since their completion, we have given away several book bags to children. Some of the children had abusive parents; some we suspected of being commercially exploited; and some of the children we simply just wanted to help. It has been a tremendous joy to watch our project transition from a concept to a successful collaboration of tenacity, passion and overwhelming generosity. The joy that staff receives when watching a child open his or her book bag and excitedly name everything that's in there is priceless. We are grateful to everyone who helped us meet a need in the life of children served here at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Child Protection Center.

The children also are able to enjoy the center's new addition Bella, a golden retriever therapy dog. Bella's job is to help build rapport with the patient and let children and families know they are in a safe place. She can help reduce anxiety, stress and fear associated with a medical exam or a visit to the center. Bella also can help build self-esteem and a feeling of control when the child gets her to do tricks. The center is working on a model for incorporating Bella with forensic interviewing at the center.

For more information about Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Child Protection Center please contact Sonia Shah at 404-785-4275 or [sonia.shah@choa.org](mailto:sonia.shah@choa.org).

**Pictured left to right:**

**Kara Klein**  
*Child Life Specialist*

**Millicent Taylor**  
*Intake Coordinator*

**Kelli Wood, MSW**  
*Forensic Specialist*

**Pearl Culberson**  
*Patient Care Tech 2*

**Sonia Shah, MS, CCLS**  
*Practice Manager*

*Hinesville, Georgia***Helen's Haven**

Thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers, World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse was a success.

A methamphetamine workshop for multidisciplinary team members, a child abuse prevention and awareness workshop, an open house, and a fun day for our community's children were the ways in which Helen's Haven Children's Advocacy Center observed World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Education Week from November 15 – 19, 2010.

Special Agent Tanya Cales, of the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Meth Task Force, spoke about production of methamphetamine and what to expect when children are involved. There were about 50 people, including law enforcement, social workers, medical providers, and more at the session.

*Stop It Now! Georgia*, a program of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, was presented to community members at Morgan's Chapel United Methodist Church in Townsend, Ga. Participants also received data on child abuse, as well as information about the signs of abuse, childhood bullying, cyberbullying, and sexting.

On Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010, Helen's Haven CAC invited the community, volunteers and multidisciplinary team members to an open house. Guests were recognized for all of their support, donations and volunteer hours.

On November 19, World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Helen's Haven invited our children and their families for a fun day at the center. Not only was there good food and face painting, but Ronald McDonald entertained the children with magic tricks and games, as well. Children also learned about fire safety and had their fingerprints completed by the Hinesville Police Department. (The fingerprint sheets can be used in the event that a child becomes missing.) Some of the attendees also received prizes, including a birthday party for 25 children at McDonald's, a gas card from Clyde's Market Gas Station, and an Applebee's gift card. Thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers, World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse was a success.

*Waycross, Georgia***Satilla Advocacy Services**

In Fortner's short time at SAS, she has already touched the lives of children and their families in a positive way through her gentle nature and her expertise.

Satilla Advocacy Services (SAS) in Waycross, Ga., is proud to announce a wonderful addition to our staff. Deborah Maine Fortner is our new crisis intervention specialist. A native to the area, she graduated from Ware County High School and Waycross College. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of North Florida. She began her career in social services in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., where she received the local Child Advocacy Center's Case Manager of the Year Award. Fortner ultimately decided to become an agent for change in her home community. She enrolled in Valdosta State University's social work program and will graduate in May with a master's degree.

Fortner originally came to Satilla Advocacy Services as an intern and quickly became a part of the team. She is in constant awe of the courage displayed by the children and their families involved in the agency's Child Advocacy Center. She strives to partner with families because she believes that

everyone in the child's environment must be involved for true and lasting change. In Fortner's short time at SAS, she has already touched the lives of children and their families in a positive way through her gentle nature and her expertise.

In addition to hiring, Satilla Advocacy Services has also made technical upgrades. New Microceptions digital recording equipment will be used for our forensic interviews. A new colposcope will be used for our sexual assault medical exams. We also recently held a three-day volunteer advocate training.

In addition, staff and our wonderful volunteers, conducted activities for April's Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Events planned included our annual softball tournament fundraiser, a SAFE training for women, a Steward's of Children training, as well as participating in a community Senior Safety Day for the elderly. Satilla Advocacy Services participates in numerous other community events throughout the year to bring awareness to child sexual abuse and to help protect our children.

## New Advisory Council Members

### *Dr. Stephen Messner and attorney Tricia L. Hise join CACGA's Advisory Council*

**DR. STEPHEN MESSNER**, lead physician at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Child Protection Center, is one of the newest CACGA advisory council members. Messner has worked at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta for nearly the past four years. He became more active with CACGA when helping to create medical standards for the organization, and its member centers. It became clear that the organization could benefit from having a medical professional on the advisory council.

"I see my role on the advisory council as providing guidance to the medical providers who work at the CACs throughout Georgia to ensure that all children experience the same high-quality examinations," he said.

Messner comes to CACGA with more than six years of experience in the area of child advocacy as a pediatrician. The mission of Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia fits perfectly with Messner's professional and personal ideals. CACs are places where children and their families can feel safe during difficult times, he added.

"It would be wonderful if there was an end to child abuse, and I had to have a career change, but in the meantime, I see the work that I do as extremely rewarding," Messner said. "While we attempt to curb the amount of abuse that our children are suffering, we can provide comfort and hopefully justice to these young victims by continuing to advocate for them."

**TRICIA L. HISE**, an attorney, is one of two new advisory council members or CACGA. She has an office located in Clarksville, Ga., and serves clients in North Georgia including the Mountain Judicial Circuit, which includes Rabun, Stephens, and Habersham counties. Hise's primary focus is domestic relations and family law. Through her work with several battered women's shelter, Hise has assisted battered women and their children obtain restraining orders against their abusers.

Hise began her career in law as a judicial law clerk for the Mountain Judicial Circuit. Upon completing her clerkship she entered the District Attorney's office, where she prosecuted felony and misdemeanor cases for nearly two years. Her caseload at the District Attorney's office included child abuse, rape, child molestation, and domestic violence cases. Entering private practice in 2007, Hise has continued to advocate for the rights of children and battered and abused individuals.

Hise's roots in North Georgia are deep, and her commitment to advocating on behalf of children and battered and abused individuals is readily apparent through the continued work she performs for individuals throughout this area.



Dr. Stephen Messner



Tricia L. Hise, attorney

## Advisory Council Member Receives National Award

### *Andrew Agatston named 2011 Outstanding Service Award recipient in the category of Victim Advocacy*

Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia is pleased to share that the National Children's Advocacy Center selected attorney Andrew Agatston as its 2011 Outstanding Service Award recipient in the category of Victim Advocacy. The service award is given to a professional who has demonstrated excellence in the collaborative approach to protecting children from the devastating impact of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

SafePath Children's Advocacy Center located in Marietta nominated Agatston, who is a member of the CACGA advisory council, for this award because of his relentless compassion to providing the most up to date legal information and training to professionals involved in child abuse cases throughout the United States. The National Children's Advocacy Center is a nonprofit organization that provides training, prevention, intervention, and treatment services to fight child abuse and neglect.



## Running for Awareness

by Amy Wells



Pictured: Elizabeth Smith, Andrea Simone, Amy Wells, Kim Yokeley, and Angie Gruber. In front is Sophie, daughter and cheerleader for Amy Wells.

Back in December, I started training for a half-marathon race. The reason I wanted to run this distance was because of my 40th birthday, and I wanted to do something big to celebrate. Challenging myself to run a half-marathon race on my birthday was my way of saying, “Forty is not over the hill. In fact, I’m going to smash that hill! My fittest and healthiest years are still ahead of me!”

**It occurred to me that this birthday run could be something more than just a physical challenge. It could be a vehicle through which to raise awareness of and money for an issue that I feel passionate about: child abuse.**

Although I enjoy physical activity, running has never been my thing. I never trained to run long distances, and the prospect of running 13.1 miles was quite intimidating. So I must admit that at first, I did not want to tell anyone about this challenge. After all, the fewer people who knew about it, the fewer people I’d have to tell that I failed in the training or was unable to complete the final distance. In fact, I only told my husband about it at first, and that was because I’d needed him to take care of the kids while I did the run.

Over time, though, I let the information slip. I mentioned it to my sister, to a few close friends, and then more friends, and I began to realize that I enjoyed people knowing about my goal. Everyone was supportive and excited for me. They wished me luck, asked about my training, and even offered to run parts of the distance with me to keep me motivated.

It occurred to me that this birthday run could be something more than just a physical challenge.

It could be a vehicle through which to raise awareness of and money for an issue that I feel passionate about: child abuse. After all, with so many people supporting me in the physical challenge, couldn’t I also ask for their support in a social challenge? That’s why I contacted the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia in order to team up with them to make a difference in the lives of abused children. I had much more to be motivated about on my birthday run than just my own health: the health and well-being of our community’s children.

### My inspiration

I was inspired to run a half marathon by my husband, my sister, and various friends, all of whom I’ve admired for their stamina and focus in running. My husband, in particular, has been a continuing source of inspiration by completing a half marathon, two full marathons, and an ultra marathon, all over the age of 40. My daughters also serve as a major source of inspiration. I owe it to them to take care of my body and my health the best that I can. They need to see that health is a priority in our family, and that physical activity is fun.

### Why child abuse?

I have always been passionately concerned about child abuse. For me, it is a problem that should not and cannot be overlooked by anyone. Regardless of political affiliation or religious conviction, regardless of whether someone is a parent, or has been a victim of abuse, there is a truth out there that is universal. Child abuse and sexual exploitation is wrong. It cannot be tolerated in our society. We owe it to every child in our community to be a strong voice against mistreating, abusing, and neglecting young people.

### My goal

I hoped to have as many people as possible pledge support for me as I ran for child abuse awareness and prevention.

*(Editor’s Note: In the end, Amy raised more than \$310.00 for the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia and the Children’s Advocacy Center of Lowndes County. More importantly, she brought awareness to her friends and community that child abuse unfortunately does exist. However, within CACGA there is a network of professionals dedicated to reduce trauma to these victims of abuse and their family members.)*

## CACGA Launches Telehealth Initiative

*Grant from Governor's Office for Children and Families helps bring critical telehealth equipment to CACs*

Earlier this year, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia received a grant from the Governor's Office for Children and Families to bring critical telehealth equipment to CACs throughout Georgia. CACGA launched the initiative on January 19, 2011 at its first summit of medical providers held at the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Macon.

Twenty-six Children's Advocacy Centers are receiving the special telehealth equipment, which allows for the transmission of live child abuse assessments between the hub and remote sites. The technology allows for care at a distance, and it is most helpful for rural areas that may not have ready access to medical necessities.

"I believe telemedicine is the wave of the future," said Dr. Jordan Greenbaum, of the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Child Protection Center. "As a large and rural state, Georgia is particularly suited for this form of health care delivery."

By using the equipment, CACs will be better equipped to evaluate children, reduce the travel time of clients, and help increase the number of successful court actions with improved expert testimonies. In addition, telehealth technology expands opportunities for training and knowledge of CAC staff with use of webinar lectures, for example.

Greenbaum has personally seen it work at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and she said that children respond well to the system and that local authorities seem to appreciate it. The stakes are

too high to not have such medical equipment available, she added.

"In some cases children simply do not receive any medical evaluation; this is unacceptable," she said. "Georgia needs to take action to better protect its children and its parents."

Gail Garland, of Harbor House in northwest Georgia, was thrilled that her center was one of the locations to receive the specialized equipment.

"It truly will assist us in fully meeting the CACGA and NCA medical standard," she said. "But more importantly, it will allow us to provide the most up-to-date equipment, support and peer review to our generous partner Floyd Medical Center, who allows us to utilize the services of their SANE nurse Barbie Townsell."

The equipment also provides high-quality photo documentation that is critical. The photos then help CACs with thorough evaluations of each client. With a new victim of child abuse or neglect confirmed every 15 minutes in Georgia, this kind of equipment is paramount and has the capacity to help thousands of children in the state.

"Many children and adults need assessment and care from a medical specialist, and we just don't have the manpower to provide these specialists outside of medium to large cities," Greenbaum said. "But telemedicine allows these experts to provide care to patients in rural areas, saving the families time, money and anxiety."



**CACs will be better equipped to evaluate children, reduce the travel time of clients, and help increase the number of successful court actions with improved expert testimonies.**

## CACGA Pays Tribute to One of Our Own



*Doreen Myers, 1973-2011*

February 10, 2011 began as just an ordinary day for Doreen Myers. The mother of a 10-year-old daughter, Doreen got in her car and headed toward Appling County to teach a class of law enforcement officers about investigating crimes against children.

Unfortunately, Doreen did not make it to the training. She was killed about 1:30 p.m. in a head-on traffic collision with a driver in Pierce County.

"Doreen worked as an investigator on child cases at the Camden Sheriff's Office before she came to work for us at the Golden Isles Children's Advocacy Center," said Jackie Johnson, district attorney of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit. "During her time here, she did a lot of good for victims of crime, especially children."

"She was one of us," added Sherry Boyd, director of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program for Brunswick Judicial Circuit.

Doreen was a stellar employee with the Golden Isles Children's Advocacy Center in Brunswick. She previously served as the interim executive director and continued to do the forensic interviews while serving in this capacity. Her previous experience as a law enforcement officer brought great expertise in the investigation of crimes against children. She was devoted to her daughter, Kaity, and to helping all children.

"I told her many times that I thought she was one of the best forensic interviewers I have ever worked with," said Greg McConnell, assistant district attorney for the Atlantic Judicial Circuit. "It was so apparent that she loved kids and the thought of her leaving behind a 10-year-old daughter is heartbreaking."

CACGA and the Golden Isles Children's Advocacy Center lost a dedicated advocate and friend in Doreen, and she will be sorely missed.

**"I told her many times that I thought she was one of the best forensic interviewers I have ever worked with."**

*– Greg McConnell*

## What are Children's Advocacy Centers?

*Children's Advocacy Centers are safe places for the evaluation of alleged child abuse. Georgia's centers provide the following services:*

*Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) enhance the response to suspected child abuse cases by combining the wisdom and professional knowledge of various investigative agencies and other professionals. These coordinated efforts can provide the knowledge, skills and resources to assist suspected child abuse victims and their families. CACs maintain focus on the child and help to ensure that systems designed to protect children are able to do so effectively.*

- Videotaped interviews of suspected child abuse victims conducted in safe, child-friendly surroundings. The interviews are completed by professionally trained forensic interviewers and coordinated with the involved investigative agencies. This reduces trauma to the child by avoiding multiple interviews and preserving statements for legal purposes.
- Professional training and community education to effectively respond to child abuse.
- Crisis intervention and emotional support for victims and non-offending family members, and guidance in accessing the crime victim's compensation system.
- Counseling and medical services to help child victims begin the healing process, offered on-site or through referral.
- Multidisciplinary review of cases by a team of professionals, including but not limited to law enforcement, child protective services, prosecutors, medical and mental health professionals, victim's assistance staff, and child advocates.
- Forensic medical exams of suspected child abuse victims utilizing specialized equipment for accurate diagnoses, offered on-site or through referral.



Children's Advocacy  
Centers of Georgia

Become a  
supporting member

Donations can be mailed to:  
CACGA  
P.O. Box 1192  
Decatur, GA 30031

For online donations visit:  
[www.cacga.org](http://www.cacga.org)

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### Full Member Centers

#### *Albany*

Firefly House Children's  
Advocacy Center  
(229) 435-0074

#### *Athens*

The Cottage  
(706) 546-1133

#### *Atlanta*

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta  
Child Protection Center  
(404) 785-3820

#### *Atlanta/Decatur*

Georgia Center for Child Advocacy  
(678) 904-2880 or (404) 378-6100

#### *Augusta*

Child Enrichment, Inc.  
Child Advocacy Center and CASA  
(706) 737-4631

#### *Blairsville*

Enotah Child Advocacy Center  
(706) 835-1637

#### *Brunswick*

Golden Isles Children's Center  
(912) 554-0609

#### *Cairo*

South Georgia Children's  
Advocacy Center  
(229) 378-9042

#### *Cartersville*

A Better Way –  
CAC of Bartow County  
(678) 605-9023

#### *Columbus*

Children's Tree House  
(706) 327-9612

#### *Cordele*

The Gateway Center  
(229) 273-0600

#### *Cumming*

Forsyth County Children's  
Advocacy Center  
(678) 208-1908

#### *Dalton*

The GreenHouse  
(706) 278-4769

#### *Douglas*

Child Advocacy Center  
of Coffee County  
Sadie's House  
(912) 260-1492

#### *Duluth*

Gwinnett Sexual Assault Center  
and Children's Advocacy Center  
(770) 497-9122

#### *Ellijay*

Appalachian Children's Center  
(706) 273-2225

#### *Forsyth*

C.A.R.E. Cottage  
(478) 994-7287

#### *Fort Oglethorpe*

Child Advocacy Center of the  
Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit  
(706) 866-8811

#### *Hinesville*

Helen's Haven  
(912) 369-2326

#### *Jonesboro*

Rainbow Connection Child  
Advocacy and Assessment Center  
(770) 478-6905

#### *LaGrange*

Children's Advocacy Center  
of Troup County  
(706) 298-0050

#### *Loganville*

A Child's Voice  
Child Advocacy Center  
(678) 639-0300

#### *Macon*

Crescent House  
(478) 633-7044

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SafePath  
Children's Advocacy Center  
(770) 801-3465

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(229) 890-5549

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(706) 235-5437

#### *Royston*

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Child Advocacy Center  
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The Sunshine House Children's  
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#### *Toccoa*

Power House for Kids  
(706) 886-2290

#### *Valdosta*

Children's Advocacy Center  
of Lowndes County  
(229) 245-5369

#### *Warner Robins*

Rainbow House Children's  
Resource Center  
(478) 923-5923

#### *Waycross*

Satilla Advocacy Services  
(912) 285-7355

#### *Winder*

The Tree House  
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#### *Woodstock*

Anna Crawford Children's Center  
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#### *Blakely*

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(229) 723-2468

#### *Dublin*

Stepping Stone  
(478) 275-9010

#### *Gainesville*

Edmondson-Telford Center  
for Children  
(770) 534-5151

With 36 full member centers and three developing centers, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia is working to ensure every child in Georgia has the support they need to be safe and happy.





## Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia

*Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia (CACGA) is a nonprofit membership organization with the mission to promote, assist, and support the development, growth, and continuation of child advocacy centers in the state of Georgia. CACGA is an accredited chapter of the National Children's Alliance.*

*This program is supported in part by the Governor's Office for Children and Families and the Department of Human Services through appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly.*

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