

HEALING OUR CHILDREN ALSO HEALS OUR COMMUNITY

by Connie & Earl Trump

“The Child is father of the Man; and I could wish my days to be bound each to each by natural piety”. So wrote William Wordsworth in his poem My Heart Leaps Up, implying that lessons learned while young influence us throughout our lives, with him particularly hoping he would retain the joys of his youth. Sadly, not all children experience a carefree, joyous youth. Some lose their youthful innocence much too soon—enter the Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center, (ACCAC), a non-profit dedicated to supporting a community in which children are safe, families are strong and child victims of abuse can be kids again.

As April is designated “National Child Abuse Awareness Month”, the Center’s Director, Elida Murray, asked that we write a few words about child abuse from our observation and perspective, both as community members as well as participants of the Exchange Club of Gettysburg. The Exchange Club, among other endeavors, focuses on supporting ACCAC in their efforts to meet the needs of children and families traumatized by experiencing child abuse and its effects.

Our realization, after discussion and research, is that when a child is exposed to emotional, physical or sexual abuse, it’s not just a problem for the child, but also a problem that affects the whole community. When children get the help they need they are better able to overcome the trauma of abuse and can go on to lead healthy, productive lives. Experts estimate that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys become victims of abuse before the age of 17 who, if untreated, may incur costs to the community due to stress related health concerns, addictions, criminality or other issues. (1) A 2019 Pennsylvania State Report showed over 36,000 cases of child abuse overall, with 385 in Adams County. (2)

ACCAC brings children who have been abused or neglected into a welcoming, child-friendly facility where they can feel safe while being greeted by a Child & Family Advocate. Families are provided with a listening ear, advocacy support and services, as well as referrals to other community agencies who assist in restoring physical and emotional health to all.

While at the Center, each child meets with a specially trained forensic interviewer to talk about his/her experience to avoid having to repeatedly relate traumatic events as the investigation of abuse or neglect progresses to completion. Caregiver education, support groups, as well as medical and mental health services are offered, free of charge, to every child and family.

Since the Center’s opening in 2006, ACCAC has supported 1,957 victims and their families and also conducted outreach prevention to 12,179 community members. ACCAC’s efforts provide an intrinsically important service to the Adams County Community. Healing the child **can** heal the adult he or she becomes!

To continue this important work, ACCAC relies on community support. For more information, please visit the website, www.kidsagaincac.org or email emurray@kidsagaincac.org .

1. Website, CDC Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences

2. Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

“Connie & Earl Trump are Adams County residents and longtime members of the Exchange Club of Gettysburg, as well as volunteers for Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center. They encourage you to join them in their efforts to inspire hope for victims of child abuse and to ultimately, put an end to it in our community.” E.M.