

Blue ribbons focus on child abuse prevention

The Woodward Area Coalition (WAC) in conjunction with the Woodward County Department of Human Services (DHS) are seeking participants to show support for Child Abuse Prevention Month.

They are hoping the community will participate by decorating trees with blue ribbons for the month of April. April is child abuse prevention month and blue ribbons are the international symbols for child abuse prevention.

The Blue Ribbon Tree program is done annually.

“They’ve been doing it for years,” states Karen Harrison, a member of the Woodward Area Coalition.

Raising awareness of child abuse and neglect has been very important for children in Oklahoma.

“There were 128,024 investigations for child neglect and abuse in 2013,” said Sabrina Krueger of Child Welfare.

Of the 128,024 investigations, 11, 418 of those were proven to be cases of child abuse. By the end of 2013 there were 10,233 children in the custody of the state. Only 1,321 children were adopted.

The blue ribbons can be purchased from stores or they can be made at home. Flagging tape is one type of material that is considered to work very well. The number of ribbons on each tree can represent many things such as: quantities of children who suffered child abuse, the number of newborns in the community, or other representations may be selected. A specific quantity is not required so those who choose to use a non-specific quantity of ribbons may do so as well.

Participants are also invited to register their tree on the Official Tree Registry. Forms can be printed at [HTTP://fsps.health.ok.gov](http://fsps.health.ok.gov). Those who register with their photos by April 2 will be featured in a slide-show presented at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The presentation will be on April 8th for Child Abuse Prevention Day (CAP). They will also be featured in the CAP Month Scrapbook for 2014.

Any questions may be directed toward Karen Harrison of the Woodward Area Coalition at (580) 254-5322 ext. 107, or Sabrina Krueger of Woodward and Harper County Child Welfare at (580) 254-6019.



Staff members of the Woodward County District Attorney's office stand by a ficus that they adorned with blue ribbons in honor of Child Abuse Awareness Month this April. Pictured are Megan Schultz, Stacy Tapia, Chris Boring, Karla Taylor and Sherry Goodwin. Each of the 91 ribbons on the tree represents a child abuse or neglect case that was filed in DA District 26 in 2013. In addition to Woodward County, District 26 also covers Alfalfa, Dewey, Major and Woods counties. Boring, who is an assistant district attorney in Woodward County, said that the reason his office made the blue ribbon tree was “just trying to get awareness out there” about child abuse and that it is a major problem in Northwest Oklahoma as well as across the nation.