

Wednesday, March 24th, 2010

Burge To Speak on Child Abuse Prevention

Sissy Burge of Marietta will speak on child abuse prevention efforts in the area to the Love County Community Coalition at a noon luncheon at the Love County Library on April 5.

She will be recognized for leadership as executive director of the C/SARA Foundation in Ardmore.

Her appearance is part of Child Abuse Prevention Month activities in Love County. The Community Coalition has actively supported the prevention, reporting, and treatment of child abuse and neglect for 20 years.

April 5 is “Blue Ribbon Day.” Following the luncheon, the coalition will string a garland of 4,800 blue ribbons—representing the number of children served each year by health and social service agencies in Love County—around a tree on the lawn of the Love County Library.

The garland, along with signage recognizing child abuse prevention, will remain on display throughout the month. The seniors’ RSVP program of Big 5 Community Services, headed by Eyvonna Lemons, assembled the garland.

Other activities in the month-long observance are a Poker Run and Bike Show with a stop at **Mercy Health/Love County Hospital** on April 10, and a Child Abuse Puppet Show which will appear at all Love County elementary schools from April 19-28.

Burge has been associated with C/SARA for 10 years, the last five as executive director. The foundation engages in crisis response and crisis response training for schools and other institutions in Oklahoma and elsewhere.

Notably, C/SARA houses the central location in southern Oklahoma for medical evaluation and forensic interviewing of child and adult victims of sexual assault. Its Child Advocacy Center (“Sara’s House”) is located on 16 NW in Ardmore.

Services in the comfortable, home-like setting are free.

Children are referred by child welfare or law enforcement officers. Women are referred by domestic violence agencies or law enforcement, or may seek rape crisis intervention services on their own.

Exams are performed by SANE sexual assault nurse examiners and nurse practitioners. Evidence and interviews are documented for possible court action. Leads to follow-up social services are provided on-site.

The C/SARA Foundation was established in 1991 by Dr. Harry and Lynda Galoob of Ardmore in memory of a daughter, Sara.

Burge was honored in 2000 by the Oklahoma chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners as child advocate of the year.

She is a past-president of both the Oklahoma association of Children’s Advocacy Centers and the Carter County task-force on child abuse prevention. She was its advocate of the year in 2006.

She chartered the Multidisciplinary Teams in Marshall, Murray, and Johnston Counties, following the establishment of such teams in Carter County and Love County.

MDTs, made up of law enforcement, child welfare, mental health, and prosecutorial workers, jointly investigate criminal child sexual assault in their respective counties, all utilizing the services of Sara’s House.

Burge is a member of the Carter County task force on domestic violence prevention and the *Ardmoreite* editorial board.

Prior to joining C/SARA, she chartered the Carter/Love Safe Kids Coalition devoted to bicycle and car-seat safety.

Burge and her husband, Billy, have two children.