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Ada steps into action

ADA — On Monday, April 16, Pontotoc County Turning Point and Ada Area Success By 6® will step into action with Bikers Against Child Abuse with Ada, Walk This Weigh.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and a time to reflect on ways to increase child abuse prevention efforts. BACA is a national group that exists to provide aid, comfort, safety and support for children that have been sexually, physically or emotionally abused. Sponsors say their goal is to empower children to not feel afraid of the world in which they live.

BACA will join Ada, Walk This Weigh in leading a one mile walk, honoring Child Abuse Prevention Month, beginning and ending at Ada Public Library, 124 S. Rennie. Registration will begin at 5:15 p.m. on April 16 in the Family Education Center (sponsored by Ada Area Success By 6®) located at the 12th Street entrance of the library.

During Walk This Weigh, the Family Education Center will show the video series “I Am Your Child”. This 12-part series is filled with facts about basic child development, child safety, nutrition and discipline. Topics include safety, fatherhood and discipline among others.

Every day in Oklahoma, 136 allegations of serious child abuse and/or neglect are investigated. 35 of these allegations are confirmed to be child abuse and/or neglect. During the most recent year (FY 2004) for which comparison data is available, Oklahoma ranks in the bottom half of all states (35th) in the rate of children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect (Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook, 2006-2007).

“Child abuse and neglect often take place in the home and come from a person the child knows well,” said Cassie Johnson, Community Coordinator for Ada Area Success By 6®. “While every community and its members play a role in helping children thrive and succeed, effective parenting and a nurturing home environment are key ingredients in helping children grow up to be safe and healthy,” concluded Johnson.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health's Office of Child Abuse Prevention offers the following suggestions for parents to help build healthy families:

- Help your children feel loved and secure. Make sure your children know you love them even when they do something wrong.
- Encourage your children by praising their achievements and talents and recognizing the skills they are developing.
- Spend time with your children doing things that you both enjoy. Listen to them.
- Learn how to use non-physical options for discipline that are appropriate for your child's age and development, or redirect your child's attention by offering choices, and/or use “time out” as a way to discipline.
- Seek help if you need it. Sometimes special circumstances like unemployment, or a child with special needs, can add stress to the family. If you need additional support, try to talk to a friend, healthcare provider, faith leader or counselor about what you are experiencing, or join a support group for parents.

Smart Start Oklahoma is a grassroots initiative that supports families as they raise children who are safe, healthy, and eager to learn and ready to succeed in school. By making local civic and business leaders, educators and volunteers aware of children's needs and by collaborating with local service providers, Smart Start makes better use of programs or resources that already exist. There are currently 16 Smart Start Oklahoma communities, including Ada Area Success By 6®.

For more information about Ada, Walk This Weigh call 580-427-5007 or send an email to [suzanne.barnett@adaunitedway.org](mailto:suzanne.barnett@adaunitedway.org).

For more information about Ada Area Success By 6®, contact Cassie Johnson, Community Coordinator at 580-427-5004 or by email at [Cassie.Johnson@adaunitedway.org](mailto:Cassie.Johnson@adaunitedway.org).